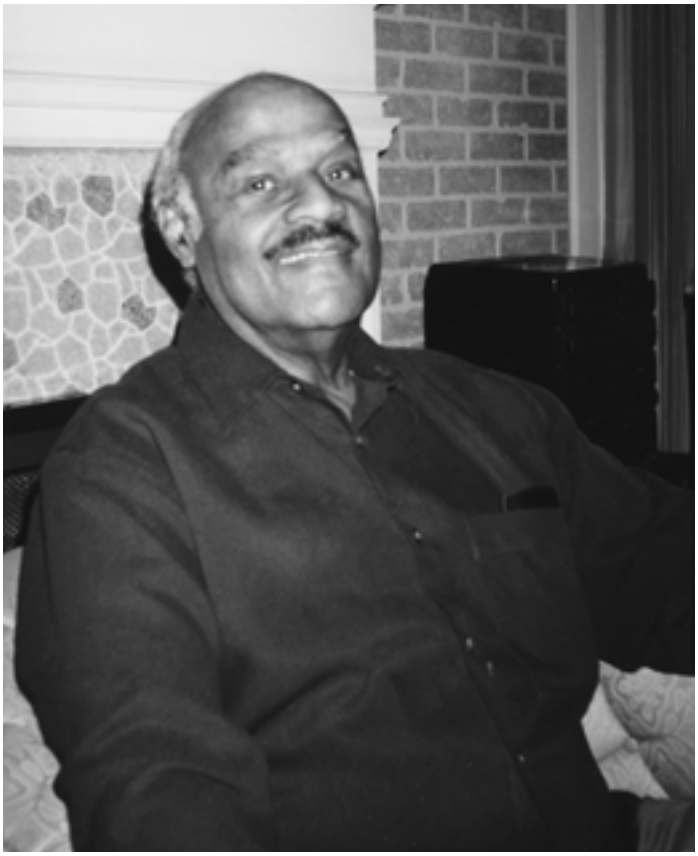
Patrick McGilligan



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Me and Oscar

An Interview with

LeRoy Collins was a movie star once, only once. But the movie was *The Betrayal,* the very last production by the African-American director Oscar Micheaux, shot in Chicago and parts of the Midwest in 1947. That makes Collins one of the last witnesses to an era and a man whose mystique has never been greater. Moreover, the part Collins played was Micheaux himself—that is, the lead character, as drawn from Micheaux's 1943 novel, *The Wind from Nowhere,* and whose name in the film is Martin Eden, in honor of Micheaux's literary hero Jack London.

Collins was in his early twenties, attending Roosevelt College in Chicago, after having served in the military in World War II. Though he had only acted passingly ("In my senior year, I was on the high school football team, and when the season ended I got bored and joined an amateur theatrical group at a community center"), he was picked out of a line of job applicants. "You are Martin Eden," Micheaux flatly told Collins, upon hiring him, "and Martin Eden was me."

The son of emancipated slaves, Oscar Micheaux was raised in Illinois, but as a young man he homesteaded on the plains of South Dakota, writing novels. The novels made him wealthy, and he turned film director.

Micheaux ultimately published seven novels, and between 1919 and 1948 made over 40 films with "all-Negro" casts that catered largely to segregated audiences. He produced, directed, and wrote the scripts of his films. While entertainment-oriented, Micheaux's films insistently explored issues such as poverty, courtroom injustice, miscegenation, and prejudice. *Within Our Gates* (1919) was made as an explicit response to D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation,* while *Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920) excoriated the Ku Klux Klan. Micheaux's 1925 film *Body and Soul* launched the screen career of Paul Robeson.

Micheaux is increasingly celebrated as a pioneering individualist who attacked racism in his films while working outside the official, segregated industry. The Directors Guild of America honored him posthumously in 1986. The Producers Guild gives an annual Oscar Micheaux award, and the pioneering African-American filmmaker even has his own star on Hollywood's "Walk of Fame." His life and career have become a growth industry for academic scholars.

Like many Micheaux films, *The Betrayal* was concerned with interracial romance. The film had a reserved-seat premiere in New York City, where Micheaux advertised it as "The Greatest Negro Photo-

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Micheaux

LeRoy Collins

Play of All Time." It is the only Micheaux production to be critiqued in the *New York Times,* where Thomas M. Pryor, in his brief 26 June 1948 review, found it noteworthy that its story "contemplates at considerable length the relations between Negroes and whites as members of the community as well as partners in marriage." Yet Pryor faulted *The Betrayal* as "often confusing" with "sporadically poor photography and consistently amateurish performances."

But the film met with great success before "Negro only" audiences in the Deep South, relates Collins. Only three years later, Micheaux would be dead, and the era of "race pictures" and segregated theaters began its slow fade. The star of *The Betrayal* never acted professionally again.

After *The Betrayal,* Collins served for 20 years as principal of the George W. Goethals Upper Grade Center public school in Chicago. He still resides there, in the South Side neighborhood of Chatham. His recollections of Oscar Micheaux and the making of *The Betrayal* are all the more fascinating, given that all prints of the film—like so many other Micheaux productions—have disappeared. In his mid-seventies today, Collins is still trim, and still sports a thin mustache, like the strikingly handsome young man whose face stares out from the lobby cards of *The Betrayal*. "Playing Oscar Micheaux" started, for him, as little more than an intriguing summer job.

PATRICK MCGILLIGAN*: What happened when you met Oscar Micheaux for the first time?*

LEROY COLLINS: During the summer of 1947—even though I was in summer school—I was looking around for a job to supplement my income. Someone found out they were going to do a movie in the city, and they were interviewing people for different types of jobs—stagehands, prop men, and whatnot. A couple of us who took the same classes went over to the studio they had rented, on 29th Street, and they started interviewing us for these various jobs. I was called aside by one of the assistant directors who said, "We'd like you to read for a part."

I was taken over to meet Mr. Micheaux. He asked me some questions about myself, and then I read for him. All he said was, "I want you to read for a part that you might be able to play." I said O.K. So I read a page, and then he had me read another page. Then he looked at his wife and said, "I think this is the one." That was it. I was cast.

Why do you think Micheaux chose you?
I got the part because I looked like Oscar Micheaux wanted me to look.

Did he gave you any advice for your audition?
Nothing. Just: "Read it in your own style."

Were you being camera-tested at the same time?
No. I just read for him, and he was the sole evaluator.

What did he look like?
He was in his sixties, elderly, mature, with salt-and-pepper hair. He always wore a suit and tie—and I think maybe he smoked an occasional cigar. He had some physical problems; he kind of limped, and if I recall correctly, sometimes he carried a cane. He had medicine that he had to take.

He was staying in a nice hotel on 51st on the South Side with his entourage. I went there later to discuss my contract and sign it. He had made money on his books and his earlier pictures—especially because there was no middleman on his pictures, and he was the distributor—and he had a chauffeur with a big black limousine who was also a kind of general handyman and assistant.

You said his wife, the actress Alice B. Russell, was with him when you met him.
She was always with him. Alice was refined, well-educated. She had a role in the film, and she would help by holding the script and keeping track of scenes. She was always there on the set, and would correct any lines that weren't being done right.

What was this studio like, that he had rented for filming?
It was an old radio news studio. He had furniture and equipment brought in for the filming, and then he used buildings outside for shots of Chicago. Sometimes we went to Wisconsin or Michigan for scenes, especially for the farms and ranches of South Dakota.

Can you describe—for people reading about The Betrayal *for the first time in this interview—your role in the context of the larger story of the film?*
This picture was the autobiography of his life. I played him, Oscar Micheaux—although the character's name in the script was Martin Eden. I was the lead actor. I had to memorize a big thick script, and I was in 75 percent of the scenes.

Weren't you daunted by the challenge of playing the director in his own life story?
No—although I was told later that 40 or 50 people before me had read for the role, people like Oscar Brown, who was a well-known writer, singer, and all-around entertainer.

Had you yourself ever heard of Oscar Micheaux, prior to meeting him?
Never heard of him.

Had you seen his movies?
Like everyone else, I went to movies. I may have seen his, but I didn't attach his name to any that I saw.

Had you read any of his books? Had you read The Wind from Nowhere, *the book on which the film is partly based?*
Not beforehand. I did eventually read *The Case of Mrs. Wingate* and *The Wind from Nowhere*.

In order for you to play the part, didn't Micheaux require you to read his books and do some research about his life?
No. He didn't say anything about that to me, or to anyone else in the cast. Some of the cast were professional actors from Chicago who were in radio. One was a character actor who had been in Hollywood pictures. One young lady I knew because we grew up together. Another actress, Yvonne Machen, had been on the stage in New York; she had played the lead in *Anna Lucasta*. Harris Gaines, another lead, had had a top role in a radio drama in New York.

We had three or four weeks of rehearsal before we shot the film—just reading through the script, because it was a long-drawn-out movie. The cast was all there, at a YMCA or community center he rented out. There were maybe 20 of us who had big speaking parts. We sat around with the script, but it was like a theater situation, and those who had lines would come up to the front of the room and stand. I was up there most of the time, because I had more involvement than everyone else. He'd intervene to tell us to speak up, or read a line a certain way; he'd correct you. He wanted to get it down to a fine point before you got into costume, because he was spending a great deal of his own fortune to do this movie.

What was his manner with actors?
Very gruff. Not what I would call polished. He was very to the point, matter-of fact, no put-on. He didn't

have any patience with people. If he wanted something done, he wanted it done correctly, right then and there. He knew exactly what he wanted—and his manner wasn't pleasant. He'd shout at people. He never shouted at me—not once. He was gentle with me, with the leading ladies, and with two or three other ladies. I think he was quite the guy with the ladies.

Why do you say that?
Because he put so many women into the story of his life—they are out of context sometimes, just in one scene sometimes. There was the white lady in North Dakota he was in love with, and a black lady in Chicago whom he marries, and another lady in another place that he's romancing . . . etcetera. It wasn't done in the same way they do things now, but you got the idea that this guy wanted people to know he saw quite a few ladies in his day.

But you didn't see any evidence of him womanizing during the filming?
No, he was older, and all business. His attitude was, "This is my money we're spending, and let's do it quick and get it done with."

I remember he never called us by our real names. It was always by the cast name. I was Martin. From the first moment he laid eyes on me he didn't call me anything other than the name of the character in his book. It was always Martin this, Martin that. I just assumed that identity as far as he was concerned. I don't think he knew my other name except when he wrote the check out.

Your character was named Martin Eden after the Jack London novel—did Mr. Micheaux ever talk about his affinity for Jack London?
No, but it was in his books. If you read his books, you'd see that. Most of his autobiography, and most of his early life, involved living out on the Dakotas on ranches. He was the only black in the area, and he started writing books, and I think he more or less used Jack London as his image. That idea motivated him. There he lived a sort of Jack London, isolated existence—a very different kind of existence for a young black man at that time.

Did he confide anything in you about his life at that time?
No, and he never referred to the fact that this was his life.

Wasn't that a bit odd, considering?
Well, everyone knew it, so there was really no reason for him to say it. He said to me, "You are Martin Eden, and Martin Eden was me," and that was it. We understood: "This is my life story. I lived the way Martin Eden did. These are the people I associated with, and these are the life experiences I had," and the dramatization of that story is the only thing that changed. He fictionalized parts of it, built it up, although some of these things possibly did happen.

You say he was kind to you.
He could be gracious, if he liked you. If he liked you, he had charm, and I was one of the ones he liked. I was allowed to improvise, for example, and I remember that the other actors wore makeup but he stipulated that at no time was I ever to use any makeup. Everyone did, but me.

Why?
I don't know what his reason was. He said it wasn't necessary for me to have makeup on. I guess he wanted me to look more rugged, like he was as a young person.

Did he give you any acting advice?
He told you a few camera clues: "Never look at the camera"—things like that.

That's a pretty good clue, actually!
It all came natural to me, and that's why he liked me, I guess. He said to me, "Be yourself," and I was pretty much natural in the part. I could have survived in the part except that some of the surrounding cast were so weak because they were amateurs, and plus the parts were so badly written. I said to myself, "I can't talk that way. It's not me." So I went ahead and improvised a little, and he never interrupted me. But he didn't let the others improvise. He'd shout at them if they did.

Did he compliment you if you did it right?
His attitude was, "I expected you to do that." One day the professional actor from Hollywood said to me, in front of the whole cast, that I had a marvelous memory for having committed the script to memory—which I had. But Mr. Micheaux's attitude was, "I expected that."

What did he do on the set? Did he walk around, gesture, look through the camera?
He did everything. He would set up the angle. He would direct the movements. He'd sit on a stool and watch, but he would be in command, directing the troops.

He had a crew there to do the actual filming. It wasn't a big crew, but it was a crew. A crew to do the filming, another crew to move the sets around, and another to do the audio part. All the crew, the camera-

man and whatnot, were white, incidentally. He was not very patient with them either.

Why were they white?
Oh, those were union jobs.

Did you have any sense that it was a low-budget production? Were you paid fairly?
I wouldn't know what was fair. There was no job I could have gotten as a college student that would have paid me more money.

Was the budget tight in any way?
Probably, but I had no feeling about that, because I had no experience—no frame of reference. He rented a lot of things out.

How was the camerawork? Was the cameraman good, and was Micheaux interested in the visual quality?
It was pretty good, but Mr. Micheaux would usually try to do things in the quickest way and the cheapest way. By the time we got to the photography we had gone over the script for three or four weeks, and everyone had their parts down to perfection, in terms of memory. He would do as few takes as possible. If he liked it, he'd say, "That's it," and if not, we'd shoot it again.

In the evening he'd have the cast sit down, and they'd run the rushes from the previous day. We'd look at those rushes. If he saw something there he didn't care for, we'd reshoot the scene, because it had been done just the day before. If anything was off, it was reshot the very next day—because the costumes and people were still there.

So he'd try to work quickly, but he was willing to reshoot.
Oh yes. We looked at rushes, and even several months after all the filming was done he had several of us—particularly me, because I was the lead actor—go and shoot a scene that had to be reshot. One of the scenes was on a train, so the assistant director, the cameraman, and some actors and myself went up to the North Shore somewhere and shot a scene on a train that had to be redone. We did that for two or three scenes.

Micheaux himself wasn't there?
No, it was handled by his assistant director.

Considering that The Betrayal *is a lost film, and people can't see it nowadays, can you recall any particular scenes—either good or bad? There must have been some interesting stuff going on in a three-hour-plus movie.*

Yvonne and Harris were very good actors. She played a hellcat, and she acted that role very well. He was her pompous, dignified father, who wanted to break up the marriage of Martin Eden to her sister. They were very effective in their scenes together.

I had to wear a Western costume with a big hat and boots at the beginning of the film. In other scenes, when visiting the city, I'd be wearing a suit. But I remember the Western costume, and being up on a horse at one point, saying goodbye to a friend in the West, and then riding off into the sunset. That was a pretty scene.

There was a scene in which the wife has a gun, and Martin Eden is struggling with her—done first in long shot and then with closeups—a good scene, as I recall. And I remember a scene where I was walking in the Dakotas, and the wind from nowhere—the title of the book—came roaring up. They had huge fans blowing on me, and I was supposed to be walking in one direction, but the wind was so strong that it pushed me back, very realistically—almost like a tornado. It even knocked me on the ground, which it was supposed to do. Things like that I remember, but this was over 50 years ago now.

When was the last time you saw the picture?
I saw it only once, at the premiere here in Chicago. The theater was packed. I went with some of my fraternity brothers, and we slunk down in the last rows.

Mr. Micheaux opened it on Broadway—it was the first all-black movie to play Broadway, but the press clippings were not good. For one thing, they said it was too long and the dialogue was drawn-out. Even though I was in it, I knew that. If I could have improvised better, the picture would have been better, because I had taken speech classes, and I had some success at speechmaking. Even I knew that the dialogue could be improved.

Were the characters speaking in some kind of studied fashion?
The dialogue just didn't come natural to a lot of the characters, and the scenes just went on and on. It was like someone saying, "Here is my philosophy, here is how I feel, and I'm going to say it all through this character right now, all at once."

Was he using the dialogue as a platform for his ideas, is that what you mean?
As I have said to other people, I thought he was a pompous and self-serving man—but I respected him, because he was doing something that very few people

could do. He had the wherewithal and the knowledge to do it, too. He was a very good businessman, but . . .

How about "artist"? How much of an artist was he?
He lacked a true artistic touch. He just related his life experiences and put them into a written form and then brought them into a moving picture format. He depicted life, his life, and things that he wanted to be heard about—but I would be highly critical in terms of quality. In terms of *The Betrayal,* certainly, though the quantity was there; the film was *long*.

He certainly saw himself as an artist.
He did, he did. And he was a pioneer, no question about it. He was bold, saying just what he wanted to say. His attitude was, "Get out of my way—this is what I'm going to do."

I remember one day, we were driving down the road in Michigan, looking for a farmhouse. There must have been four or five cars and trucks in a row, like an Army convoy. He was up front in one car with the cameraman, with me and some actors in the back. He saw the right farmhouse and told the cameraman, "I want a picture of this exterior scene." Well, there were people in the window of that house looking out at this line of cars and trucks—and he yelled at them to get out of the window. Told the people to get out of their own window!

He had boldness, brashness, and I always say he was a—quote—character. He was a unique person for his time.

The advertisements for The Betrayal *seem to court controversy over the interracial romance angle, boasting "The Strangest Love Story Ever Told."*
That was in the 40s, and in most parts of the country that was unacceptable. The theme was very bold for its time—it was a controversial issue—which goes to the genius of the man. How was he going to achieve something that was sensational? *Create* something sensational; that was intentional. He exploited situations in order to gain notoriety, and on the basis of that came his success. He was selling something—and that was his strategy: making a big issue of it, getting people to talk about it. He knew exactly what he was doing.

When they showed *The Betrayal* throughout the South, the lines formed for blocks outside the theaters. I later saw newspaper pictures of the lines. The picture wasn't a hit in New York on Broadway, but it was accepted by the black audience in the South. It only played on Broadway for a week or so, but that was so Mr. Micheaux could advertise "Direct from Broadway" when it played in all those other places.

You have to realize that in this time period blacks could not go to white theaters throughout the South and various other areas, or they could go only on certain days—like only Wednesdays—so Mr. Micheaux rented those theaters after the regular performances were over, at nine or ten o'clock at night, and that's when *The Betrayal* would be shown. That was a hurdle he had to leap—and his greatest attribute, if you ask me. You really have to admire the man. He took on the very formidable task of becoming a distributor at that time, when there were no black distributors. But that is where the money is; the money isn't in making the movie, it's in how you get out and use your resources to distribute it and reap the benefits. He was highly competitive in that sense, and took the movie around like a road show picture, from one town and city to the next.

Did you do any further acting, after The Betrayal*?*
No. That wasn't my dish. It was fun being with the people, and it was fun to make-believe, but it was also hard work. You got up early and you worked all day and when you got home it was dark. It may sound glamorous, but not when you're going through it. After that picture I finished college and then went into my field of education. I was a teacher and junior high school principal, here in Chicago, for 24 years.

Did you ever see or hear from Mr. Micheaux again?
Not really—but I married my leading lady, Myra Stanton. She was my first wife; we are long since divorced. We had gone to the same high school but didn't start dating until we were making the film. Afterward we got married, and then we had to laugh, because for our wedding gift Mr. Micheaux sent us one of his books, signed.

Patrick McGilligan's most recent book is *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light* (HarperCollins, 2003). His *Backstory 4: Interviews with Screenwriters of the 1970s and 1980s* is due from the University of California Press in 2005. He is presently working on a new biography of Oscar Micheaux.

Abstract The mystique of pioneering African-American novelist and film director Oscar Micheaux has never been greater, 50 years after his death. His last film, *The Betrayal,* was made in 1947, and all prints are lost, but Patrick McGilligan tracked down the star of the epic-length film, who played a character based on Micheaux himself, for a revealing interview about the Jackie Robinson of American film.

Matthew Bernstein

Oscar Micheaux himself (right) portrays one of the detectives who discovers the notorious and curious murder notes beside the victim's body in *Murder in Harlem*.

Oscar Micheaux and Leo Frank

Cinematic Justice Across the Color Line

Recent scholarship on Oscar Micheaux has established that the pioneering black filmmaker drew on a variety of materials in creating his fictions: on autobiography for his 1913 novel *The Conquest* and its film incarnation *The Homesteader* (1917); on urgent issues (lynching and concubinage) in the black community and on D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) for *Within Our Gates* (1919); and on white-authored stage plays (such as Nan Bagby Stephens' *Roseanne* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*) for *Body and Soul* (1925).[1] Examining Micheaux's diverse sources and unconventional "adaptations" of others' works, Corey Creekmur has argued that in the study of Micheaux's fiction,

> the comfortable identification of one text as an "original" and another, or others, as "derived" adaptations frequently oversimplifies the actual multimedia and multidirectional circulation of texts in a zigzag process that at moments might be better described as translation, allusion, deformation, parody, homage, copyright infringement, "signifying," or . . . masquerade. . . . [Micheaux's] incessant refashioning of his own and others' "source" materials should be recognized as *radically* unoriginal.[2]

Clearly, Micheaux's novels and films were composed of an exuberant bricolage that drew upon whatever personal experiences and storylines he felt would amount to a compelling narrative compatible with his views about the place and conduct of blacks in America.

Thus it is not surprising—in fact it is well known—that for the murder mystery plot line of two or three of his films (depending on how one counts them), Micheaux drew on one of the most sensational American trials in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This was the Atlanta, Georgia, Mary Phagan/Leo Frank case of 1913 to 1915, in which a Southern black factory sweeper provided the crucial evidence which found his Jewish superintendent guilty of—and eventually lynched for—the murder of a Southern, white, teenage, female employee. Micheaux emphasized this source when he advertised *The Gunsaulus Mystery* (1921) and its sound "remake," *Lem Hawkins' Confession* (1935).

What *is* surprising is how little attention has been paid to the traces of the Phagan/Frank trial in the one film of the three that remains extant, *Murder in Harlem*. Critics generally acknowledge the case as a source and proceed to consider other issues, or they don't mention it at all. But comparing Micheaux's film with the actual case enhances our understanding of how Micheaux constructed his narratives within his "radically unoriginal" cinema. In this case, we see how Micheaux could take a familiar, if decades old, public controversy and use it as a baseline for embedding his preferred plot elements and character types, as part of

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Rare photos of Leo Frank and Mary Phagan
Courtesy of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center

his diagnosis of African Americans' current social status and his prescription for black middle-class values.[3]

The Phagan/Frank case would have appealed to Micheaux as dramatic material for many reasons. The case was in the public domain, so there were no copyright issues or costs. Micheaux often favored the depiction of a falsely accused and ultimately exonerated black suspect in a murder case (one thinks of Jean-Baptiste in *The Homesteader* novel and the later film *The Exile* [1931]). Moreover, as Henry T. Sampson has argued, Micheaux included white characters in his novels and films to create a "crossover appeal" to white audiences, and he based *The Gunsaulus Mystery*, like the novel from which he adapted *The House Behind the Cedars*, on events "well-publicized" in white newspapers.[4] Indeed, just before shooting *Lem Hawkins' Confession*, Micheaux visited Atlanta in the spring and summer of 1934, where he informed the local black *Daily World* that, based on the crossover "success" of 1933's *The Emperor Jones* (starring Paul Robeson), all-black-cast films had a great future ahead of them.[5]

Most of all, however, Micheaux would have been drawn to the Phagan/Frank phenomenon because the case itself was sensational and, to many observers, genuinely compelling and/or ambiguous. This in turn explains why songwriters, novelists, and filmmakers have constantly portrayed it since 1913.[6] For Micheaux specifically, the black/white dimensions of the case rendered a ready-made storyline consistent with the kinds of controversial subjects—such as lynching, miscegenation, mixed blood, and passing—which his films had addressed and would continue to depict. For American blacks and whites, the Phagan/Frank case struck a number of raw nerves as it unfolded and then was remembered in the first half of the twentieth century. Hence, before examining Micheaux's film, it is essential to begin with the case itself.

During the night following Confederate Memorial Day in April 1913, white 13-year-old Mary Phagan was found beaten and strangled in the basement of Atlanta's National Pencil Factory, which Leo Frank supervised and of which he was part owner. An early suspect was the factory's black night-watchman, Newt

Lee, who had discovered Phagan's body and called the police, who brutally grilled him to get a confession. But superintendent Leo Frank was convicted on the basis of rumors and circumstantial evidence—most notably the (very likely perjured) testimony from black factory sweeper Jim Conley, supplemented by other witnesses. Frank was also done in by a corrupt and desperate Atlanta police force, which resorted to the planting and suppression of evidence. Phagan became a symbol of Southern innocence and martyrdom; she was assumed to have been killed while fighting Frank to preserve her virginity. Atlanta's solicitor general Hugh Dorsey demonized Frank as a northern, Jewish, lecherous capitalist who exploited young, female, working-class laborers. The presiding judge and jury were too intimidated by Atlanta popular sentiment—manifested in large crowds inside and outside the courtroom—to declare a mistrial. Frank's attorneys did not move for one.[7]

That a white man could be convicted by a Southern white jury on the testimony of a black witness only seven years after Atlanta's infamous race riot (in which white Atlantans killed and injured many black citizens), was just one of the trial's unusual aspects. Frank's attorneys mishandled the case badly, and public opinion demanded vengeance for Phagan's death beyond the conviction and execution of a Southern black male. Frank's lawyers alleged that Dorsey had coached Conley in his testimony; they and Frank himself excoriated Conley as "a dirty, filthy, black drunken, lying nigger" and a "black brute." Their views were echoed in papers around the country favorable to Frank, but their comments had no legal impact. [8]

Following Frank's conviction in fall 1913, several appeals to the state appellate and supreme courts failed, as did two appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court. Dorsey and populist spokesman and publisher Tom Watson opposed all these efforts, and Watson especially stirred up sentiment among Georgians against Frank as the appeals process ensued. Georgia Governor John M. Slaton commuted Frank's death sentence to life imprisonment in June 1915; after a near-fatal stabbing by a fellow inmate in July, Frank was abducted on August 16 from the state prison by 25 "Knights of Mary Phagan." They lynched him the following morning in Marietta, several miles north of Atlanta, near Phagan's birthplace. Though crowds surrounded Frank's limp body and photographed themselves, no one was ever tried for the crime.[9]

Historians understand the Phagan/Frank case to reflect many interlocking cultural tensions of the period. It embodied Southern populist resentment of industrialization and modernization, particularly as these processes were perceived to affect the quality of life and morality of native Georgians (Mary Phagan's siblings and parents were tenant farmers forced to move into the city for mill work). In gender terms, as Nancy MacLean has argued, the unfounded, unproven charges that Frank had raped or attempted to rape Mary Phagan played upon Southern fears of young women's financial and social independence and sexual adventurism that grew as they began employment in urban factories.[10] Leo Frank, as Tom Watson's editorials show, was viewed as an agent of these sweeping changes. His status as a northern "carpetbagger" inflamed sectionalist sentiment against him; Frank's position as superintendent and part-owner of the factory stirred class resentments; and his Jewishness encouraged his enemies to demonize him as a lecherous pervert whose whiteness hid his subversive intent, whose sexual appetite cost Mary Phagan her life, and whose affluence emboldened him to try to evade justice. Given these prevailing views, all the accusations against Frank were so resonant that legal proof of his guilt was unnecessary to sway observers and the jury.[11]

Simultaneously, many aspects of the case reflected white supremacist assumptions. These included the beliefs of the prosecution, the jury and white Georgians that Jim Conley's testimony was truthful, even if there were many suspect features to him and it. Conley had a criminal record. He had given three different affidavits to the police before the trial, each one elaborating in greater detail how Frank killed Phagan and got Conley to help dispose of the body, and asserting ultimately that he witnessed Frank engage in perverse (i.e., non-coital) sexual activities with female employees after hours. White bigotry held that that a black man would lie initially before telling the truth: thus Conley's last affidavit had to be the most truthful, rather than the most coerced and most fully fictionalized in self-defense. White opinion also held that a black man could not have lied so elaborately and steadfastly as Conley did on the stand without breaking down, especially under extensive cross-examination by some of the best (white) attorneys in the state. As with Frank's Jewishness, in the minds of the jury, the press, and all spectators, cultural stereotypes of blackness replaced the hard evidence so lacking in the case.[12]

The national and local impact of the Phagan/Frank case was considerable. Acting on their horror at this "American Dreyfus" case, Jewish leaders of B'nai B'rith, whose Atlanta chapter Frank had led, formed

the Anti-Defamation League to combat anti-Semitism. More ominously, on Thanksgiving Day 1915, three months after Frank's lynching, 34 "Knights of Mary Phagan" joined Colonel William J. Simmons and the revived KKK at Stone Mountain, ten miles east of Atlanta; these men named Atlanta the national capital of the Invisible Empire. They were also among the cheering moviegoers who stomped and rebel-yelled at the Atlanta premiere of Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* two weeks later.[13] And there was an ambiguous postscript to the case: in 1982, the 83-year-old Alonzo Mann, a gofer in Frank's office, confessed that Jim Conley was the guilty party, and alleged that Conley had threatened Mann into silence. Mann passed numerous lie detector tests, and his testimony eventually led to a 1986 state pardon which did not exonerate Frank, but noted the state's inability to conduct a fair trial and to protect Frank personally. Nonetheless, many today in Marietta still maintain that Leo Frank was guilty.[14]

While Frank's lynching was just one of 288 white murders between 1882 and 1930 (as compared with 2,500 black lynchings between 1880 and 1930), in its general outline and in its minute details, the Mary Phagan/Leo Frank story was, and remains, compelling, uncertain, and shocking.[15] Aside from lost Frank lynching footage, several film treatments of the subject predated Oscar Micheaux's silent film: the 1915 fictional feature *Thou Shalt Not Kill* (Circle Film Corp.), about an innocent man sent to his execution on circumstantial evidence, and that same year's documentary short *Leo M. Frank*, by the same director, Hal Reid.[16] In each version over the decades, storytellers selected certain details and discard others, in accordance with what they understood the case to say about the South and the United States, about Southern and American justice, about racial prejudice, about ethnic and class antagonism, and about the mob mentality. Micheaux's films are intriguing both for what they depict and for what they omit.

When Micheaux promoted his fifth feature-length film, *The Gunsaulus Mystery,* in 1921, ad copy began, "WAS LEO M. FRANK GUILTY?" It continued:

> Do you recall the strange and tragic case of Leo M. Frank, charged with the murder of little Mary Phagan; tried, convicted and sentenced to be hanged on the testimony (so claimed) of Jim Conley . . . , who testified that the defendant led a double life? Oscar Micheaux, the well-know[n] Race author and motion picture producer was in the court room during this most sensational trial and shortly afterward wrote a story of the same, interweaving a romance, which he ha[s] recently made into a photoplay.[17]

While Micheaux's attendance at the trial and even his presence in Atlanta in 1913 are difficult to verify, Micheaux clearly knew the details of the case and the prosecution's brief against Frank as they were reported in the city papers. He drew upon those details for both his film and for his 1915 novel *The Forged Note: A Romance of the Darker Races*. In a chapter entitled "A Jew; a Gentile; a Murder and Some More," Micheaux recounted thinly disguised aspects of the case: he set it in "Attalia," had the case prosecuted by one "Doray [Dorsey] the solicitor," with the case publicized by a "Big Noise" whose editor [Watson] "had once run for president, on a ticket [Populist] we cannot recall." Micheaux's version here also included actual case details whereby a series of witnesses had recanted their affidavits indicting Frank, but then reaffirmed them. As early as 1919, Micheaux had proposed making *Circumstantial Evidence,* a film of the Phagan/Frank case, likely drawing on his novel's sketch and responding to Hal Reid's fictional film.[18]

Plot descriptions in black newspapers tell us that *The Gunsaulus Mystery* was set in New York (opening with shots of the city skyline), and concerned West Indian author/lawyer Sidney Wyeth (also the protagonist's name in *The Forged Note*), who is hired to defend a former girlfriend's brother, a night watchman, against the charge of murdering a young white woman, Myrtle Gunsaulus. The attorney establishes that the woman's killer was a white man: the guilty factory supervisor, named Anthony Brisbane, is convicted on the testimony of black janitor Lem Hawkins. Hawkins describes Brisbane as a Jekyll/Hyde type—respectable manager at work, and a sexual pervert in secret—who killed Stanfield to hide his attempted rape of her, who made Hawkins help him hide the body, and who then tried to blame Hawkins for the murder itself.[19] In other words, *The Gunsaulus Mystery* dramatized the National Pencil Factory janitor Jim Conley's testimony. Hence, one ad for the film's run at the Chicago Vendome Theater described *The Gunsaulus Mystery* as a "melodramatic photoplay showing the part being taken by our people in the progressiveness of the race,"[20] alluding to Conley's singular prominence in the trial proceedings. A *Chicago Defender* article about *The Gunsaulus Mystery* also mentioned the Frank case connection, and similarly noted that Frank was

convicted on the testimony of "one of 'our folks.'" The film received some strong praise in Chicago: a *Defender* review hailed Micheaux's film as "highly dramatic" with "bits of comedy" (perhaps the Conley character) that made it Micheaux's best film yet.[21] In Atlanta, however, promoting the film's Leo Frank connection only provoked the city's film censor into ordering *The Gunsaulus Mystery* to be shipped out of town, an action that merited even a brief item in the white papers.[22]

While, as noted above, *The Gunsaulus Mystery* does not survive, Micheaux remade his films constantly. In 1935, he directed *Lem Hawkins' Confession*; the following year he recut and rereleased it as *Murder in Harlem*, which does survive, though its similarity to the 1935 version is uncertain. Micheaux maintained the silent film's New York setting and romantic plot, and again he altered the names of most of the principal characters. Roughly half the running time of *Murder in Harlem* reenacts the Phagan/Frank case.

The film begins as black night-watchman Arthur Vance (Lorenzo McClain)—the Newt Lee character—discovers white employee Myrtle Stanfield's body in the *National* Chemical Laboratory basement (Frank ran the *National* Pencil Factory in Atlanta). The white laboratory supervisor Arthur Brisbane (the Leo Frank character, played by Micheaux veteran Andrew Bishop) has something to hide; as was alleged of Frank, Brisbane doesn't answer his phone when Vance tries to reach him.[23] Upon arriving at the factory, the police (one of them played by Micheaux himself) discover ambiguous written notes next to Stanfield's body. Their verbiage is identical to one of the two notes found next to Phagan's body. In the actual case, one read, quizzically, "He said he wood love me land down play like the night witch did it but that long tall black negro did boy his slef [sic]." In Micheaux's film, one note reads, "He tell me lay down like night witch." A second one reads, "The tall Negro did this. He will try to lay it on the night." A later scene reveals that Myrtle Stanfield, like Mary Phagan, received a major blow to her head, but died from strangulation. To anyone familiar with the specifics of the Frank case, the source of the murder mystery plot in *Murder in Harlem* would be unmistakable.

After these opening scenes, *Murder in Harlem* detours from the Phagan/Frank case to develop its romantic plot. A flashback to three years earlier introduces author Henry Glory (Clarence Brooks), and shows his efforts to sell his novel door-to-door to finance his law school education, his encounter with Claudia Vance (Dorothy van Engle), and their budding courtship. Because of a misunderstanding (Glory thinks Claudia has aided her criminal neighbors, who mistakenly rob Glory), their relationship abruptly ends. After the flashback, back in the present, Claudia comes to Henry's law office to ask him to defend her brother Arthur, the night-watchman. Glory and Claudia interview Arthur in jail and get his version of events (he is innocent).

The subsequent preliminary hearing and trial scenes unfold as a dramatization of competing black-and-white versions of how Myrtle Stanfield was killed, relying heavily, as Micheaux's films frequently did, on character flashbacks. Brisbane alleges at the hearing, and we see in a flashback, that Myrtle had come to Brisbane's office to collect her $1.50 pay (Phagan had come to pick up $1.20). Then Vance, smoking a cigarette and acting suspicious, entered the stockroom to retrieve some shoes after Myrtle Stanfield had come in to check on a new shipment. When Brisbane entered the room later, he found her dead. (Frank never found Mary Phagan's body and claimed complete ignorance of her demise.) Myrtle's tearful mother testifies in court that Myrtle and her boyfriend George Epps had gone to the plant that day to collect her salary because Brisbane insisted that Myrtle collect it personally. (Phagan's mother did not testify, but she appeared in court and succumbed to several emotional outbreaks during the proceedings.) Micheaux adds another striking detail to his script: George Epps, Jr., was the name of a young Atlantan who rode the trolley with Phagan into the city on her last day alive; according to Epps, Phagan had confided in him that she feared Leo Frank because of his unwanted familiarity with her, a claim Epps would later retract and then reassert (under Atlanta police pressure). In Micheaux's film, this Epps enjoys looking at scantily dressed women in a magazine while he waits for Dorothy. He is also jealous of Brisbane.

One day after a session in court, Claudia overhears Brisbane telling lab worker Lem Hawkins (Alec Lovejoy), the Jim Conley character, to "stay away from lawyers and keep your mouth shut." Two days later, in her neighbor's nightclub, The Catbird's Seat, Claudia flirts with Hawkins at length, gets him drunk, and induces him to admit that he knows that Arthur Vance is innocent. After she informs Henry Glory of this news, Glory calls Lem to the stand.

At this point, *Murder in Harlem* dramatizes Lem Hawkins' testimony in flashback, and Hawkins' story closely follows Jim Conley's assertions at the actual

(Clockwise from top left): attorney Henry Glory gets Lem Hawkins (the Jim Conley character) on the witness stand and his confession ensues. He meets Arthur Brisbane (the Leo Frank character) in willing servant mode outside the brick factory walls. Brisbane teases Myrtle Stanfield (the Mary Phagan character) with her pay envelope and then follows her into the back stockroom while Lem happily looks on. Then back to the stockroom, where Myrtle lies on the floor as Brisbane looks her over.

Leo Frank trial. Hawkins relates that Brisbane had given Arthur Vance time off earlier that day when he reported for work. (Newt Lee told the Atlanta police that Frank had asked him to come in early on Confederate Memorial Day and then told him to come back two hours later because Frank had not finished his work.) The flashback continues as Brisbane pays Lem a quarter to serve as lookout in the factory stairwell, and then attempts to rape Stanfield in a backroom adjacent to his office. (Conley claimed Frank paid him for his help; a factory worker found what police claimed were Mary Phagan's blood stains and hair in an office across from Frank's; this was quietly refuted after the trial, too late to help Frank.) In the film, Hawkins sneaks over to the keyhole of the back room door to watch Brisbane and Stanfield. (Jim Conley claimed to have seen Frank performing oral sex on factory employees in his office, and that Frank had confided in Conley that he did so because he was not "built like other men.") While Brisbane attacks Stanfield (offscreen), another woman comes for a tryst in his office, and Hawkins hurries back to his post in the stairwell. (Jim Conley claimed at the trial that Frank regularly held rendezvous with factory girls in his office while Conley served as a lookout; a few female employees vaguely affirmed Conley's claims.)

As Hawkins' flashback continues, Brisbane explains to Lem that he accidentally knocked Stanfield unconscious when she resisted his advances in the other room. When Brisbane sends Hawkins in to revive her, Hawkins finds her dead. At Brisbane's orders, the two men move her body to the basement (this occurs offscreen). Back in Brisbane's office, he dictates the notes found by Stanfield's body to frame Arthur Vance (who is tall, whereas Lem is short). He also orders Hawkins to burn her corpse, so no evidence will remain and Vance will be lynched immediately. He gives Hawkins $250, then takes it back. (In the case, Jim Conley's third affidavit to the Atlanta police claimed that Frank had killed Phagan in a room near his office, forced Conley to help move the body, dictated to Conley the puzzling death notes found beside her, and offered him $200 for disposing of the body.[24]) In the film, Hawkins pleads pathetically with Brisbane to forgo burning the body, and passes out drunk at a bar across the street. Vance discovers the body in the base-

ment that night. Thus ends Lem Hawkins' confession in the film trial—the spectacular testimony of the black janitor which indicts his white employer.

Clearly, Micheaux imported Jim Conley's testimony wholesale into this portion of *Murder in Harlem*. The level of detail Micheaux employed is striking, beyond the general outline of Conley's claims. During Lem's testimony flashback, Brisbane explains Myrtle's fate to him:

> BRISBANE: Did you see that little girl who came up here a while ago?
>
> LEM: Yas suh, uh, I seen one come up here and she done come back down. And then I seen a . . . a . . . another one come up, but, she ain't come back down yet.
>
> BRISBANE: Well, the one that didn't come back down, came into my office and then went into the stock room where I followed her. I . . . I wanted to make love to the little girl, but she refused me. We got to scuffling and she got her fingers in my face and eyes, and I . . . I had to hit her to make her turn loose. I . . . I don't know how hard I hit her, but she . . . she fell down and hit herself against something and got hurt. I don't know how bad she's hurt. I want you to go back there and bring her here so we can put her somewhere. Hurry up, Lem! Hurry up! There's money in it for you!
>
> LEM: Yassuh.

At Frank's trial, Conley described a conversation with Frank the day Phagan died as follows:

> After I got to the top of the steps, he asked me, "Did you see that little girl who passed here just a while ago?" and I told him I saw one come along there and she come back again, and then I saw another one come along there and she hasn't come back down, and he says, "Well, that one you say didn't come back down, she came into my office awhile ago and wanted to know something about her work in my office and I went back there to see if the little girl's work had come, and I wanted to be with the little girl, and she refused me, and I struck her and I guess I struck her too hard and she fell and hit her head against something, and I don't know how bad she got hurt." . . . He asked me if I wouldn't go back there and bring her up so that he could put her somewhere, and he said to hurry, that there would be money in it for me.[25]

Micheaux recognized suitable script dialogue, intact, in Conley's testimony, and used it to show how Brisbane confided in Hawkins.

Why would Micheaux adapt Jim Conley's testimony at the Leo Frank trial almost verbatim? Because Lem Hawkins' confession and the general plot line of *Murder in Harlem* dramatized the consensus of many black newspapers of the teens that Conley's claims were true and that Leo Frank was a duplicitous, lecherous murderer. The black press's attitude to the case arose in part from anger over the amount of attention Frank's fate received when so many black lynching victims never even got a trial. Regarding Frank's defense, the consensus held that "whites were again looking for a black scapegoat." The NAACP's *Crisis* wrote, "A white degenerate has now been indicted for the crime, which he committed under the most revolting circumstances." The Chicago *Defender* agreed, noting, "There seems to be absolutely no question of his [Frank's] guilt." As historian Eugene Levy generalizes, the black press, without romanticizing Conley, felt he simply told the truth, and that if one bit of evidence had emerged to cast suspicion on Conley, he would have been indicted, if not lynched, immediately. (One significant exception in the black press was Atlanta's own *The Independent*, which labeled Conley "a discreditable Negro.")[26]

Micheaux's publicity for *The Gunsaulus Mystery* likewise built upon the prevailing perspectives of the black press on the case. A May 1921 ad in the Chicago *Whip* asserts of the Frank case that "the evidence shows that Leo Frank committed the crime and got a COLORED MAN to help him dispose of the body. And then tried to blame the crime on the COLORED MAN."[27] In *Murder in Harlem*, the Leo Frank character Brisbane's portrayal is consistent with these views: he is an immoral, manipulative white employer who abuses his social and economic power to lord it over a black male and a white female employee and evade the consequences of his actions. He calls Hawkins over with a haughty finger whenever he needs help. He berates Hawkins for not spelling the murder notes correctly, and has him rewrite them (as Conley alleged Frank had done). He tells Hawkins that night watchman Vance should have been lynched "by now" and generalizes that "Negroes spill their guts when they see a cop." When Hawkins balks at burning the body, Brisbane explains, "Somebody's going to hang for this job—why should it be me? I've got wealthy people in Boston." (Conley's first affidavit alleged that Frank had told him that Frank "had some wealthy people in Brooklyn and then he held his head up and looking out

(Clockwise from top left): Lem's confession continues as he discovers Myrtle's dead body. Henry Glory questions George Epps's mother and she tearfully relates how her son, also framed outside the factory's brick walls, espied Brisbane's attempt to rape Myrtle and his subsequent strangling of Myrtle out of jealousy.

of the corner of his eyes said, 'Why should I hang?'"[28]) Brisbane's treatment of Myrtle Stanfield is equally reprehensible. Unlike the married, thin, and short Frank, Brisbane is single and burly, but as was alleged of Frank, Brisbane attempts to gain sexual favors by using his power as the women's supervisor (one flashback scene visualizes that power casually by showing Brisbane's office full of typing secretaries). When Stanfield comes for her pay, Brisbane repeatedly and teasingly offers her the envelope and then pulls it away.

If Micheaux appropriated numerous details from the Phagan/Frank case for *Murder in Harlem*, he diverged from the case to create a conventional romantic plot between Henry Glory and Claudia Vance, and to create an intrepid heroine. Claudia, Arthur Vance's sister, intervenes decisively in the case at two points, thereby saving her brother's life. *Murder in Harlem* frequently alludes to or mentions the potential lynching of black suspects, as when Vance is first booked for the crime at the police station (and the police discuss getting Vance to a safe place), when Brisbane discusses framing Vance for the murder with Lem (as noted above), and when Lem himself fears that "the white folks gonna lynch me sure." At these moments, and in the close-ups of Vance and Lem as each discovers Myrtle's dead body and looks directly at the camera in panic, the film refers explicitly to the mortal stakes for Jim Conley and Newt Lee at the Frank trial and for all blacks similarly accused (such as the trial, ongoing at the time of the film's release, of the Scottsboro defendants) in the 1930s American South. Fortunately for Vance, sister Gloria discovers the Brisbane-Hawkins connection during the trial, accosts Hawkins at The Catbird's Seat, and gets him to admit that "that poor jug" Arthur Vance is "just being railroaded." No such amateur investigative work transpired in the Phagan/Frank case.

After Claudia's efforts facilitate Lem's crucial testimony, she leads Henry through George Epps's pal to a distraught Mrs. Epps (Laura Bowman), who reluctantly confesses via another flashback that her (adopted) son is in fact Myrtle Stanfield's murderer. It turns out that George strangled Myrtle after he had witnessed Brisbane's advances to her in the back room. George misinterpreted Myrtle's resistance as a loving embrace and her unconsciousness as her way of taunting him. He wanted to kill Brisbane as well, but had to flee when Lem Hawkins entered the stockroom. By an amazing (!) coincidence, then, George killed Myrtle in the few minutes between the time Brisbane left her unconscious and Lem Hawkins found her dead, leaving Brisbane, Lem, and the audience to assume that Brisbane was in fact the murderer. Mrs. Epps sadly admits that her son bears "the mark of Cain" (an alternate

title for the film). A newspaper article later informs us that Epps was shot while attempting to free friends from the Illinois state penitentiary. (The real Epps was placed in a Georgia state reformatory after the trial.[29]) In all these ways, then, *Murder in Harlem*'s Claudia takes her place beside Micheaux's many other admirable heroines (such as Sylvia in *Within Our Gates*).

Likewise, other divergences from the Phagan/Frank case in *Murder in Harlem* take their impetus from Micheaux's perennial thematic preoccupations, particularly the notion of racial uplift, as evidenced in the romance between the capable Claudia and novelist/lawyer Henry Glory, the Micheaux hero par excellence ("Of course, you're going to order one," he tells a customer for his novel, "if for no other reason that it is a colored author"). He and Claudia discuss the "dicty people" who wouldn't read the book if they knew the author was black, and the preponderance of unemployed but suitably married "colored professional men" in Washington, D.C. Juxtaposed with the gangsters who hang out in Claudia's building, and the Catbird herself (whom actress Bee Freeman plays as a Mae West type), Glory and Claudia appear solidly middle-class and unpretentious. They are reunited after Arthur Vance is cleared, and as they laugh together, the lowlife couple across the hall continues to bicker.[30]

In particular, the professional, dignified Henry Glory—whom Claudia describes as "a strange and unusual man with a definite direction"—is contrasted in Micheaux's film most sharply with Lem Hawkins, the spineless, lower-class, alcoholic slob who does Brisbane's bidding. As Glory, Clarence Brooks stiffly projects an air of dignity and refinement. As Hawkins, stage and screen comic Alec Lovejoy (who was, like Jim Conley, "short and stocky") impersonates a buffoon. In his extensive, insightful analysis of Hawkins' traits and functions in *Murder in Harlem*, J. Ronald Green describes Hawkins as "one of the less-than-admirable black characters who is caught in the machinations of white intrigue," one who embodies a minstrelsy caricature, "the worst characteristics of the world of race entertainment." At the The Catbird's Seat, where Claudia tricks Hawkins into revealing what he knows about Myrtle's murder, Lovejoy performs a great vaudevillian turn as he paws at Claudia, gets progressively drunker and tells her she's a "girl that knows class when she sees it." As Green has detailed, other customers in the room subject Hawkins to a "cutting gaze"—"the middle-class look of disdain upon lower-class behavior"—and this gaze recurs when Glory badgers him on the witness stand to the laughter of spectators.[31]

It is illuminating to consider Green's analysis from the standpoint of the Phagan/Frank case. The minstrelsy caricature continues in Lem's flashback, as he subserviently embodies the "slave mentality" which some black newspapers ascribed to Jim Conley. He happily agrees to follow Brisbane's orders—taking Brisbane's quarter, he comments, "Sure is a good white man," and does a shuffle in what Green describes as "a white man's living juke box."[32] His attempt to spy on Brisbane and Stanfield in the backroom turns comical when he hurries to return to his post in the stairway as another female employee approaches. He turns infantile when Brisbane takes back the $250 bribe, bawling, "Is that the way you do business?" As Green notes, all these scenes are played "for laughs, in spite of the distinctly unhilarious predicament Hawkins finds himself in—being implicated in the rape and murder of a white woman."[33] In each of his scenes, Hawkins implicitly affirms Glory's upstanding nature.

Yet, as Green has also noted, there's a striking inconsistency in Lem's behavior during the scene in which they write the murder notes. Hawkins drops the minstrel caricature and turns temporarily shrewd and serious when Brisbane begins dictating them. (The turning point for Lem, incidentally, seems to be the sobering experience of helping Brisbane carry Myrtle's body to the basement.) The dissatisfied Brisbane dictates the notes over and over (as Conley alleged Frank had done), and Lem debates his phonetic spelling of "Negro." Lem signals that he fully understands that Brisbane hopes to frame Vance with the notes, to which Brisbane replies, "You understands too damn much." Green notes that Hawkins does "revert to caricature at the end of the scene," and thus that "Hawkins' resistance to Brisbane is not radically oppositional." Green more generally reads Hawkins' minstrel incarnations in this film as allegories of racist American entertainment.[34] Such a reading for the scene, in its momentary exposure of Hawkins' role-playing with Brisbane, would also explain why Hawkins' trial testimony, in spite of all his personal duplicity, is assumed and proven in the film to be truthful. And to the extent that Hawkins' behavior allegorizes black dissembling in the presence of white social authority, it also alludes to Jim Conley's own trickster shrewdness in avoiding both Leo Frank's accusations against him and the lynch mob's violence.

Yet even this duality in Hawkins' characterization at this particular point in the story—when Brisbane dictates the murder notes—can also be seen to echo a central debate about the authorship of the notes during the Phagan/Frank trial and appeals, one which his-

(Top row, left to right): Micheaux's upstanding heroes: novelist lawyer Henry Glory sells future sweetheart Claudia Vance a copy of his novel. The intrepid Claudia seduces Lem into getting drunk in The Catbird's Seat and into admitting that he knows the identity of Myrtle's killer. She later brings a friend of George Epps's to see Henry. He leads the couple to Epps's mother, who reveals the true killer.

(Bottom row, left to right): Brisbane informs Lem of his apparent murder of Myrtle. After they move her body to the basement (offscreen), Brisbane dictates the infamous murder notes to a temporarily wised-up Lem, in a scene that reproduces a pivotal aspect of Leo Frank's murder trial.

torian Jeffrey Melnick discusses at length.[35] The murder notes were composed as if written by Mary Phagan before she died. Both sides in the case agreed that she did not write them and that the handwriting was Conley's. Beyond this, they differed. Frank's attorneys claimed that Conley himself wrote the murder notes to frame "long, tall" night-watchman Newt Lee. Growing up in Brooklyn, they argued, Frank could not be familiar with Southern black dialect or even with the "night witch," a figure of Southern black superstition (though "night witch" could be read as a misspelling of "nightwatch" or night-watchman).

In opposition, the prosecution upheld in many ways Conley's assertion that Frank dictated the notes as Brisbane does in *Murder in Harlem.* Dorsey argued, for example, that no Southern black would have been able or stupid enough to linger around a dead white woman's body to write the notes. When the defense refuted Conley's initial claims that he was illiterate, Dorsey demonstrated that Conley was incapable of spelling words correctly. There followed some analysis of whether or not the Southern black Conley would have written "Negro" or "nigger" in the murder notes, and "Negro" is precisely the word whose spelling Hawkins asks Brisbane to repeat in the film.

Given all the other details Micheaux took from the Phagan/Frank case, the fact that he replicated these specific aspects of the trial may not be surprising, but the equivalent significance of these details in the case and in the film is worth dwelling on. In general, to obtain Leo Frank's conviction, the prosecution had to successfully characterize Jim Conley as an "old faithful darkey" just following his master's orders in the writing of the notes. As Melnick puts it,

> Drawing on the conventions of the minstrel show and the plantation-school novel, [Prosecutor Hugh] Dorsey insisted that Conley be understood within the category of "old Negro." In turn, it fell to Frank's supporters to contend that Conley was a new kind of African American—anarchic, degraded, and dangerous: to them Conley was just the sort of "new Negro" who loafed, got drunk, and attacked white women.[36]

Hawkins gets drunk in the film, but as we have seen, he does not in any way embody a rapacious black brute. Still, the importance of the notes in the actual case, if not the broader significance of Conley's literacy or illiteracy relative to American history (with its allusions to racial uplift and the denial or granting of voting rights), very likely informed Micheaux's decision to show Hawkins' shift from minstrel buffoon to literate, intelligent employee in the note-writing scene in

Murder in Harlem. For that film scene builds upon the same interplay between conceptions of African-American males—old and new—which informed the trial's debate about Conley's true nature.

If examining the parallels between Micheaux's film and the Phagan/Frank case help us appreciate the film's significance as well as Micheaux's creativity, a consideration of the film's other, broad divergences from the case (in addition to Claudia's detective work) proves equally revelatory. For example, in gender terms, Myrtle Stanfield's vulnerability as a factory worker is not dwelt upon, but is taken for granted and referenced in passing, thereby downplaying the gender dynamics that informed the actual case. More strikingly, the Jewish angle is completely absent from the film. Neither of the white villains, Brisbane or Epps, is identified as Jewish. Perhaps they do not need to be for anyone in Micheaux's audience familiar with the infamous trial of two decades earlier. Or perhaps Micheaux wished to evade censor trouble or to avoid insulting the Jewish film producers and backers for some of his sound films (such as Franklin Schiffman and, more significantly, the Jewish Alfred N. Sack, who produced *Murder in Harlem)*, since his story indicts the Frank character for mendacity if not murder.[37] Whatever the reason, the elision of Frank's Jewish identity also prevents the film from exploring the intriguing convergences and tensions between the black and Jewish communities during the case. Brisbane is a WASP with "wealthy people in Boston." Equally significant, by setting the film in New York City, Micheaux eliminates the element of sectional conflict that informed and so influenced the outcome of Leo Frank's trial. As a result, the film recasts the case's central tensions as those of race and class—across and on both sides of the color line (employer-employee, lawyer-janitor), not North versus South. (There is not even a hint of solidarity among the laboratories' black employees Vance and Hawkins.) Still, Micheaux's film reflects contemporary black newspapers' consensus that the murder of Mary Phagan was in inspiration and execution entirely white people's business.

Perhaps the most surprising element of all in Micheaux's film is the fact that justice, after great effort, is achieved in the courtroom and with Epps's demise. (Although we do not see Brisbane's punishment for perjury, he has been exposed as a liar.) Intentionally or not, *Murder in Harlem* expresses faith in the American judicial system, particularly when it is handled by a "smart" black attorney (as Brisbane calls him) like Henry Glory, and when a lowlife like Lem agrees to tell the truth (a climactic act whose significance is reflected in the 1935 film's title). Micheaux's film here contrasts dramatically not only with the ongoing Scottsboro trial of the 1930s, but with *They Won't Forget*, Hollywood's 1937 fictionalized version of the Phagan/Frank case, wherein the Conley character recants his obvious perjury on the stand, the murderer is never definitively identified, but the Frank character is lynched anyway. The entire film mounts powerful protests against the corruption of justice and mob violence (specifically lynching) in the South (and by extension, throughout the country). Given Micheaux's harrowing depiction of lynching in *Within Our Gates*, his decision to omit the actual trial's violent denouement in *Murder in Harlem* is surprising, if not disappointing, but this too can be read as consistent with black interest in Conley's central role in the case, as opposed to Frank's fate.

Murder in Harlem also shares with other Micheaux films its suggestion, through its repeated and sometimes contradictory flashbacks, that uncovering "what really happened" requires persistence and intelligence to see beyond the white "truths" printed in newspapers or offered in trial testimony. As Jeffrey Melnick puts it, "The fascinating move Micheaux makes is to suggest that none of the principals in the action has enough information to be a trustworthy witness at the trial that follows." As a result, Henry Glory must piece together, in Corey Creekmur's words, "the accumulation and coordination of black and white narratives." [38] And as we have seen, Glory can only do so with Claudia's help. That the murderer is ultimately revealed to be Epps, a minor figure in the actual case, once again exemplifies Micheaux's propensity to play with the details of the fictional works on which he based other films (see Charles Musser's discussion of how *Body and Soul*'s concluding revelation that the evil preacher is just the mother's nightmare serves to counteract the white paternalism of Nan Bagby Stephen's source play *Roseanne*[39]). Shifting the blame in *Murder in Harlem* from Myrtle Stanfield's sleazy factory supervisor to her sexually obsessed, juvenile-delinquent, lower-class boyfriend implicates multiple classes (upper, middle, and low) of white society in her death and suggests male and female resentment of industrialization. More practically, perhaps the director felt the story needed a new, additional twist to the well-known and well-used Phagan/Frank story upon its remaking or rerelease. Or perhaps Micheaux sought to further distance the film from the case to avoid censorship like that he had found in Atlanta in 1923.

In any case, this discussion of *Murder in Harlem* enables us to appreciate anew Micheaux's creativity—the ways in which he could take the predominant black perspective on a nationally known, 20-year old, sensational interracial murder mystery, add certain cinematic conventions (the romantic plot, the musical performance at The Catbird's Seat), and reassert his gender and racial politics by adding the characters of the proto-feminist heroine, the novel-writing middle-class attorney, and by molding and playing upon the negative example of the "disreputable" Lem Hawkins. Keeping the Phagan/Frank case in mind, *Murder in Harlem* assumes the outlines of a subtextual exploitation film.

If Micheaux's allusions, deformations, and parodies of the Phagan/Frank case in *Murder in Harlem* has encouraged scholars to de-emphasize the links between them, that connection was recognized clearly in Atlanta in 1935 when *Lem Hawkins' Confession* was booked into a segregated black theater. Advertising tag lines in the black Atlanta *Daily World* referenced the film's multiple flashbacks ("the truth at last"), the film's generic identity as a murder-mystery, and its basis in "the mysterious Stanfield Murder Case" (Micheaux would publish a novel of that name in 1946). While these newspaper ads also highlighted cast members Alec Lovejoy, Clarence Brooks, Laura Bowman, and Dorothy Van Engle, the *Daily World* ran a brief publicity piece on the stars, advised (correctly) that "Few of the audience will dare guess its solution," and briefly noted that "The picture is based on authentic news reports of an actual murder case, which strangely enough, occurred in Atlanta."[40] Like her predecessor in 1923, Atlanta's city censor in 1935 needed no such prompting to recognize the film's source. She accordingly ordered that *Lem Hawkins' Confession* be "cut to about half its length, all objectionable allusions [to the Leo Frank case] deleted, and all scenes which would make the picture local, taken out."[41] Thus the Micheaux film was suppressed, like every other account of the phenomenon (including *They Won't Forget*), in the very city where the Mary Phagan/Leo Frank case transpired.

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Notes

1. On the autobiographical elements of Micheaux's work, see, for example, Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 3-9. On *Within Our Gates* as a response to lynching and other issues, see Bowser and Spence, 123-55; on the same film as a reply to *The Birth of a Nation*, see Jane Gaines, "Fire and Desire: Race, Melodrama and Oscar Micheaux," in *Black American Cinema*, ed. Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993), 49-70. On *Body and Soul*, see Charles Musser, "To Redream the Dreams of White Playwrights: Reappropriation and Resistance in Oscar Micheaux's *Body and Soul*," in *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era*, ed. Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Musser (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 100.
2. Corey K. Creekmur, "Telling White Lies: Oscar Micheaux and Charles W. Chesnutt," in *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle*, 148-49. Early in this piece, Creekmur suggests that traditional adaptation studies are inadequate to understanding Micheaux's creativity (148); but he concludes by suggesting that it is still "valuable" to examine the director's work of "adaptation in the conventional sense" (158), which this present essay does.
3. To take just two examples: in *With a Crooked Stick: The Films of Oscar Micheaux* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004—published just as this essay went to press), J. Ronald Green makes no reference to the Phagan/Frank case in his 14-page analysis of *Murder in Harlem* (177-90); he instead references Micheaux's alleged source in "the" Dorothy Stanfield murder case from Atlanta (177). Creekmur reminds us, in "Telling White Lies," 151, that *Lem Hawkins' Confession* and *Murder in Harlem* are allegedly based on the Stanfield case, but that Micheaux didn't publish his novel *The Story of Dorothy Stanfield* until ten years *after* the films appeared (Creekmur, too, makes no reference to the Frank case in his essay on Micheaux's intertextuality; as far as I can tell, there was never a Dorothy Stanfield murder case in Atlanta). Green's rich analysis demonstrates that knowledge of Micheaux's novels and films can generate insightful readings of the film's typically Micheauxian elements (he points out, for example, Claudia's crucial role in solving the murder and securing her brother's innocence [186], as I do below). Still, I would maintain, such readings of the film are missing a crucial dimension of its significance as a partial reenactment of a sensational interracial murder case.
4. Henry T. Sampson, *Blacks in Black and White: A Source-book on Black Films*, 2nd ed. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 158.
5. "Negro Films Have Good Future," Atlanta *Daily World*, May 7, 1934: 1; and "'Arrowsmith' Star Stops in Atlanta," Atlanta *Daily World*, August 5, 1934: 1. Clarence Brooks, the future star of *Lem Hawkins' Confession* and *Murder in Harlem*, accompanied Micheaux on the second visit.
6. A list of the texts based on the Mary Phagan / Leo Frank Case would range from "Fiddling John" Carson's 1913

"The Ballad of Mary Phagan" to the 1988 television miniseries *The Murder of Mary Phagan* (starring Jack Lemmon) to the 1998 stage musical *Parade*, with a book by Atlanta native Alfred Uhry (playwright and screenwriter for the Oscar-winning *Driving Miss Daisy* [1989]), and David Mamet's novel *The Old Religion* (New York: The Free Press, 1997).

7. See Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *The Journal of American History* (December 1991). The classic examination of the case is Leonard Dinnerstein's *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Steve Oney has recently published the most comprehensive account of the case in *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003).
8. Frank's attorney Luther Z. Rosser, and Frank himself characterized Conley in these racist terms; Eugene Levy quotes them in "'Is the Jew a White Man?'—Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case—1913-1915," *Phylon*, June 1974, 214.
9. In addition to Oney and Dinnerstein, C. Vann Woodward's *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938) and MacLean's invaluable essay are worth consulting on the Phagan/Frank case. Jeffrey Melnick's insightful monograph, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), builds upon MacLean's work to take a selective look at the class and race dynamics of the Phagan/Frank case. According to Atlanta historian Stephen Goldfarb, the perpetrators of Frank's lynching include Joseph M. Brown, a former governor of Georgia, solicitor general Herbert Clay, barber Cicero H. Dobbs, and Newton A. Morris, a former speaker of the Georgia House and a sitting judge. See his website, www.leofranklynchers.com.
10. MacLean, 932.
11. Dinnerstein, vii. See Albert S. Lindemann, in *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank) 1894-1915* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 223-72, for an opposing view.
12. I am indebted to Emory University graduate student Katherine Skinner for this last formulation of the role of stereotypes in the interpretation of, and discourse surrounding, the case.
13. Steve Goodson, "This Mighty Influence for Good or Evil: the Movies in Atlanta, 1895 to 1920," *Atlanta History* 34, no. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 1995): 41-44. In his "In the Year 1915: D. W. Griffith and the Whitening of America," Cedric Robinson argues that Mary Phagan's alleged struggle to preserve her virtue at the hands of Leo Frank was "a model" for Griffith's conception and staging of Little Sister's choice, in *The Birth of a Nation*, to leap to her death rather than face "certain" rape at the hands of the black renegade Gus. While Robinson offers no evidence for such assertions, the analogy between the two instances were, I think, unavoidable to Atlanta and Georgia's white supremacists watching Griffith's film in December 1915. See Robinson's article in *Social Identities* 3, no. 2 (1997): 177-78. I thank Jane Gaines for directing me to it.

    When filmed footage of Frank's lynched body circulated around the country, the Indianapolis *Freeman* editorialized about it and about the alleged, regrettable Jewish backing of Griffith's film, given blacks' and Jews' shared history of oppression. See "Leo Frank Pictures Barred," *Indianapolis Freeman*, August 28, 1915: 4; reprinted in Henry T. Sampson, *Blacks in Black and White: A Source Book on Black Films* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 156-57.
14. Vida Goldgar, "In Leo Frank's Memory," *Jewish Times*, January 1, 1999: 48. On current sentiment that Frank was guilty, see Jane Gross, "Georgia Town Is Still Divided Over the 1915 Lynching of a Jew," *The New York Times*, August 26, 2000: A7, and Bill Hendrick, "'Lynching' Reopens Old Scars for Some Mariettans," *Atlanta Constitution*, August 21, 2000: C2.
15. Stewart Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence* (Carbondale, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), ix, 260.
16. "Thou Shalt Not Kill" entry, *American Film Institute Catalogue, Feature Films, 1911-1920* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 925-26.
17. Ad clipping in the George P. Johnson Negro Film Collection, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles (hereafter, "GPJ Collection").
18. *The Forged Note: A Romance of the Darker Races* (Lincoln, NE: Western Book Supply Company, 1915 and 1916), 100-7. On "Circumstantial Evidence," see the "note" in Charles Musser, Corey K. Creekmur, Pearl Bowser, J. Ronald Green, Charlene Regester, and Louise Spence, "An Oscar Micheaux Filmography: From the Silents Through His Transition to Sound, 1919-1931," in *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle*, 242. Regarding Micheaux's presence in the courtroom, Oney's book describes the courtroom as small and tightly packed (191); it is unclear whether any black spectators, let alone Micheaux, would have been allowed to enter it.
19. See the profile of the film, "Latest Race Photo Play and Vaudeville Features at Lafayette," *New York Age*, 23 April 1921, 6, reprinted in "An Oscar Micheaux Filmography," 241-43. See also the description of the film in Henry T. Sampson, 311-12. Given Micheaux's fondness for muckraking journalism (as indicated in *The Conquest*), Micheaux may have chosen the name Arthur Brisbane as an allusion to the widely published *Cosmopolitan* reporter (thanks to Dana F. White for information on this possible connection). As Steve Oney points out in *And the Dead Shall Rise* (14), child labor was a major concern of Brisbane's employer, William Randolph Hearst, and Hearst's wife, and Brisbane himself was "a fanatic on the subject" who published articles about those abuses.
20. *The Gunsaulus Mystery* ad, clipping, GPJ Collection, Reel 5.
21. Ibid.
22. *Atlanta Journal*, 2 February 1923: 14, and *Atlanta Journal*, 4 February 1923: 3B; see also "'Gonzales [sic] Mystery' Picture is Barred," *Atlanta Constitution,* 4 February 1923: 5.
23. Steve Oney, "The Murder Atlanta Can't Forget," *Atlanta Magazine,* June 2000: 130.
24. All the details of the Phagan/Frank case mentioned here and compared with *Murder in Harlem* come from Dinnerstein's and Oney's books: the murder notes (Dinnerstein, 3; Oney, 20-21); Epps's allegations of Phagan's fears (Dinnerstein, 17; Oney, 73); Newt Lee's irregular work hours on

Confederate Memorial Day (Dinnerstein, 2; Oney, 48); the false evidence that Phagan's blood and hair were found in the room across from Frank's office (Dinnerstein, 5 and 58; Oney, 46, 231, 318); and Conley's series of affidavits against Frank (Dinnerstein, 21-25; Oney, 129-41).

25. Dinnerstein, 41-42; Oney, 241.
26. All the information on the black press reaction to the Phagan/Frank case comes from Levy, "'Is the Jew a White Man?'": black outrage at the attention Frank's lynching received (216); whites searching for a black scapegoat (215); the *Crisis* quote (216) comes from the VIth (September 1913) issue; the *Chicago Defender* quote (216) comes from the April 25, 1914 issue; views of Conley's motivations for aiding Frank and Conley's innocence (217-18); *Atlanta Independent* about Conley (217).
27. See "An Oscar Micheaux Filmography," 241-42, which reprints the item in the *Chicago Whip*, May 7, 1921, 6.
28. Dinnerstein, 21; Oney, 132.
29. Dinnerstein, 86.
30. See J. Ronald Green's excellent "Oscar Micheaux's Interrogation of Caricature as Entertainment," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1998); on p. 19, he invokes "Micheaux's ideas of moderation, the middle path and the middle class," which certainly applies to Henry and Claudia.
31. Ibid., 23. Green discusses the cutting gaze on p. 25, and Glory's interrogation of Hawkins on pp. 26-29.
32. Ibid., 28.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 29.
35. See Melnick, 88-108. He discusses each point I highlight in the text as follows: Frank's knowledge of Southern black culture (98-104); Conley's unlikely drafting of the notes (90); and Conley's literacy (93-96).
36. Ibid., 92.
37. Betti Carol Van Epps-Taylor, in *Oscar Micheaux: Dakota Homesteader, Author, Pioneer Film Maker: A Biography* (Rapid City, S.D.: Dakota West Books, 1999, 116), suggests that Micheaux expressed anti-Semitic views in a letter of 1920 while describing Jewish backers of race films, but J. Ronald Green refutes this view persuasively in *With a Crooked Stick*, 30-31 and 33-34.
38. Corey K. Creekmur, "Telling White Lies," 158.
39. Musser, 114-16.
40. "Cast of Race's Greatest Stars in [Theater] 81 Thriller," *Atlanta Daily World*, August 11, 1935: 7; August 12, 1935: 2; August 13, 1935: 6; August 14, 1935: 3; August 15, 1935: 3.
41. Atlanta City Censor Report, July 1935, in author's possession.

Abstract This essay analyzes, for the first time, Oscar Micheaux's selective use of unmistakable details from the notorious, racially charged Mary Phagan/Leo Frank 1913 murder case for narrative material in his 1936 film Murder in Harlem. Readers thus gain new insights into Micheaux's creativity and use of public history.

Akira Mizuta Lippit

Hong Sangsoo's Lines of Inquiry, Communication, Defense, and Escape

Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors

The critical and economic successes of South Korean cinema globally since the 1990s have prompted in the popular and academic presses a renewed interest in Korean national cinemas—North and South—and in the reconfiguration of Asian and East Asian film economies. Located at the intersection between colonial and Cold War histories, military dictatorship and a cautious democracy, post-WWII Asian economic resurgence and late- and hyper-capitalism, the South Korean cinema in particular has served as a fertile ground for assessing postcolonial cinema, lingering Cold War styles and rhetorics, and the cultural as well as economic vicissitudes of globalization. Much of the attention has been focused on the Korean challenge to Hollywood, the so-called blockbusters, such as Kang Che-gyu's *Shiri* (*Swiri,* 1999) and Pak Ch'an-uk's *Joint Security Area* (*Kongdong kyŏngbi kuyŏk JSA,* 2000), among others, but also on the excavation of a distinct Korean tradition and lineage—an auteur like Im Kwon-taek, for example. Amid the debates over national identity and Korean auteurship, one unlikely but extremely important filmmaker, Hong Sangsoo, has not sought a role in the constitution of Korean national identity, although his films, perhaps more than those of any other filmmaker, reflect the exhilarating personality crisis in Korean cinema since the 1990s. Hong emerged as a distinct force during the most complex of political eras, one that Korean scholar Kyung Hyun Kim describes as "postpolitical."[1] At the end of and after politics. After the end of politics, at the end of the political lines that traverse and constitute Korean history, at the other end of politics.

Hong Sangsoo's first four films—*The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* (*Tweji ga umul e ppajin nal,* 1996), *The Power of Kangwon Province* (*Kangwondo ŭi him,* 1998), *Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors* (*O! Sujŏng,* 2000), and *Turning Gate* (*Saenghwal ŭi palgyŏn,* 2002)—produced and released in two-year intervals, form a quartet of sorts.[2] Each film builds on the previous work, introducing new variations and mutations of recurring themes while preserving a sense of oblique continuity. Each film returns to a set of fa-

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Turning Gate
(above and left)

miliar features: a young male protagonist, usually an intellectual or artist, once successful, now in steady decline; ambivalent friendships; unrequited affections that generate triangulated romances; infidelity; some type of journey, not far in distance but invested with symbolic value; chance encounters that turn out to be overdetermined, seemingly predetermined, and, from a realist narrative standpoint, implausible; a frustrated and frustrating inability among the characters to communicate directly, or rather to communicate successfully; which leads in turn to scenes of sustained drinking often followed by violent sexual intercourse. And always the questions, frequently unprovoked and unanswerable, which slice through Hong's worlds.

The four films themselves form a line of sorts, as if each new film modified the previous one toward some objective. Although the affect and style—and virtually everything else—are different, the structural relations between Hong's films are not unlike the internal logic that organizes Ozu's oeuvre, which seems also to form a line, one film after the other, resuming each story where the previous one left off.[3] *Turning Gate* is perhaps the exemplary film in this lineage; it has mastered a dynamic sense of stillness—a lot of energy without much action—by eliminating the drama and fantasy, already minimal, of *The Day a Pig Fell*. The passions, physical violence, comedy, and murder that characterize *The Day a Pig Fell,* about Hyo-sŏp's love for a married woman and another man's love for his neglected girlfriend, give way, in *Turning Gate,* to a dispassionate view of a similar triangle, one man's intractable love for a married woman, and his complete lack of interest in the woman who loves him. (*Kangwon Province* and *Virgin Stripped Bare* also feature triangulations in which no one seems to enjoy reciprocated affection.) The balance between humor and gravity, absurdity and realism, is pierced but also sustained in Hong's cinema by the presence of lines, figurative and material, that traverse his films: lines of inquiry, communication, defense, and escape.

In an early scene from *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well,* a publisher, clearly uninterested in and irritated

by the protagonist Hyo-sŏp, a second-rate writer who has come to inquire about a manuscript submission, asks with no provocation, "Do you still drink a lot?" This question, which echoes and returns in various forms in Hong's later films, signals the excessive drinking that consumes many of his characters, but also the modes of communication that connect and sever relations between the people that inhabit Hong's worlds. It opens a line of inquiry that extends into vacuum, where it reverberates. What kind of question is "Do you still drink a lot?" Is it an authentic question or a rhetorical gesture—of contempt, dismissal, or reproach? What sort of response does it solicit; what is an appropriate response? Hyo-sŏp answers with a question, "Do you want to drink tonight?"

The question of the question is particularly difficult in Hong's work, since the need for specific information, "Do you still drink a lot?" is tempered, even obstructed, by the rhetoric of the question, the form of its address, and the insurmountable silence it exposes. Is the publisher's query to Hyo-sŏp a question, a challenge, or the termination of a relationship? The question here and throughout Hong's films tends to sever the lines between individuals and reroute them elsewhere. The lines never seem to connect the point of origin with its intended destination. In *Turning Gate,* the protagonist, Kyŏng-su, a fading actor who is blamed by his production company for the failure of his most recent film, is assailed by a man in a restaurant, who has noticed Kyŏng-su gazing at his woman companion's legs. When Kyŏng-su tries to pretend he was in fact looking at a poster on the wall and goes over to take a closer look at it, the barrage of questions begins: "What's your problem?" "Can't you see she's sitting there?" "What are you doing?" "What were you looking at? "Asshole, where're your fucking manners?"[4] This outburst redirects the assailant's violence from the companion he had already been harassing to Kyŏng-su. One line of inquiry turned elsewhere. Kyŏng-su's line of vision has been interrupted by a line of assault that takes the form of an interrogation: the crisscrossing of visuality and language expands the registers of lines in Hong's world, producing, here and elsewhere, an increasing and irreversible sense of chaos. The questions that traverse Hong's films indicate a breakdown of the lines (through a proliferation of lines) that separate order from disorder; a collapse that leaves Hong's worlds rife with nervous disorders, failed personal relations, and an anxious democracy. They leave the world always, it seems, on the verge of violence. The questions that surface at different moments in Hong's films unleash a cry, a failure of words and perhaps of language to forge any contact between one person and another, one moment and the next. They are, although grammatically sound, inarticulate. Minjae, Hyo-sŏp's devoted and betrayed girlfriend, asks him, "What did I do wrong?"

The alcohol that Hong's characters consume and frequently are consumed by represents, perhaps, a line of defense against questions without answers, unanswerable questions, and the force of questions that render communication useless. (A *Los Angeles Times* announcement of Hong's screening described his films as being about characters who "drink too much and talk too little." The two conditions are related.) Sustained drinking blocks communication and expression, but not only as an intoxicant. As an action, a bodily gesture, drinking prevents, or at least postpones, speaking. The mouth and throat are put to a different use, occupied by tasks other than speaking. In *The Power of Kangwon Province,* Sang-gwŏn, a scholar without a permanent teaching position, comes to the eminent Professor Kim's house to seek his help. When he discovers a fly in the drink he's been offered, Sang-gwŏn looks momentarily at it, then quietly swallows it with the cola. The gesture underscores Sang-gwŏn's failure to ask Professor Kim for his help. Drinking serves as a defense against speaking but, more broadly, ingestion and interiorization also act as a protection against the horrors of expression. The acts of drinking, smoking, stifled articulation, and the frenzied, desperate fucking that drives Hong's characters serve as gestures of ingestion. (Sex tends to impede contact and communication in Hong's films: the physical and emotional gestures of one character toward another appear inverted and produce a greater sense of solitude for each character. Sexual intercourse is rendered imaginary and masturbatory.[5]) Frenzied attempts to keep it inside, to avoid the encounter with an empty outside, and to elude the possibility of discovering an empty inside.

From time to time, the smoke, alcohol, chaos, and anger erupt in nausea and violent retching. Two views of the same moment in *Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors* show different men rushing to the toilet to vomit. (In one version, Su-jŏng asks Chae-hun, a failed artist, "Do you drink a lot?" echoing the question posed to Hyo-sŏp in *The Day a Pig Fell*.)[6] When they vomit, characters' interiorities reach the outside, through the mouth, but not as words. Nausea forms a type of supersonic scream from the inside; embodied, then disembodied, inexpressive and messy like the drunken outbursts that sometimes precede total breakdowns in Hong's films. The nervous ingestions in Hong's films signal the fear perhaps of explosion, of exposing the

ugliness inside, but also of discovering in the outside nothing, no one, no one else, no response. Better to keep it in. In *Kangwon Province,* Sang-gwŏn has written to Chi-suk, on the wall outside his apartment, this line: "Let's wait with one more deep breath."[7] Love revealed in and as a form of suffocation, asphyxiation, drowning.

The trope of expression returns as a fear, sometimes, of metamorphosis, of becoming increasingly other with each attempt to secure one's own proper identity. In *Turning Gate,* Kyŏng-su is told by someone and then repeats to two others: "Even though it's hard to be a human being, let's not turn into monsters, O.K?"[8] This plea is addressed in the first instance to his friend Sŏng-u, whose girlfriend, Myŏng-suk, he will seduce; and in the second, to Myŏng-suk, whom he will abandon. A plea, warning, and preemption in the form of a question. A metaphor of metamorphosis. Is this a question, or an imperative in the form of a question? What is the nature of its appeal, passed as it is from one character to another, like an illness or a rumor, on the occasion of a betrayal, or rather as the warning of a betrayal about to take place? What is being asked or ordered? The trope returns in *Turning Gate* as a reference to a Chinese legend, retold in the film, about a man who returns from the dead in the form of a snake to claim the forbidden object of his love. (The commoner, reincarnated as a snake, pursues the emperor's daughter, the object of his prohibited affection. She eludes capture by disappearing into the Turning Gate temple, so named because it turned the snake away.)[9] Here, monstrosity and metamorphosis are figures of a metempsychotic passion, a love that overcomes time, life, and humanity. Why resist such passion? How does one agree not to become monstrous, demonstrative (in English), expressive? What does it mean to remain human in the face of this violence (about to come), which threatens friendship and love? And at what cost? How does one agree to this suggestion or demand?

The lines of inquiry that pierce Hong's worlds are like the multiple lines of communication that never reach their destination; they disappear somewhere en route, only to reappear again elsewhere. They are, perhaps like Hong's characters, submerged, sinking, descending downward in a steady, irreversible spiral. Subterranean and subliminal, Hong's lines are there, just out of sight, always there, just beneath the surface. Most notably the telephone messages left on answering machines, brief communications scrawled on walls and temple roofs, on the back of photographs and in hotel rooms, left on sidewalks under persimmons. It's never clear in Hong's work whether this elsewhere—where questions, messages, and characters resurface—is where they are supposed to be, or where they happen to be. The accidental encounters, implausible reunions, journeys, telephone calls, repeated phrases, and revised scenes that form many of the elements of Hong's work always tremble on the line between an immutable narrative metaphysics in which every conclusion is fantastically predetermined and a purely random, although equally fantastic, series of accidents. They signal, as a set of failed attempts at communication, a desperate wish to move somewhere, toward something and someone, but also to move away and disappear, into nowhere, *atopia,* utopia. A line out, a line of escape. They also signal a fear of arriving too soon or too late, and of not arriving at all. (Chi-suk's fury in *Kangwon Province,* for example, when her policeman finally arrives at their rendezvous.) A fear of the question that arrives from another, like a blow, and forces one to look into another's face and respond. "Are you scared of people?" the policeman eventually asks Chi-suk.

Hong's characters turn around, turn their backs, turn away at the end of the line.

The questions fill a void, occupy space, postpone the arrival of something more threatening and unnamed: silence. In *Turning Gate,* Kyŏng-su asks the young daughter of his hosts, "What's your name?" "Ch'oe Hira." Then, "Who named you?" followed by, "Who do you prefer, your mommy or daddy?" ("Both, mommy and daddy," she says.) In *Virgin Stripped Bare,* Chae-hun asks Su-jŏng, "What's your blood?" It takes several repetitions before she understand that he is asking about her blood type. When she answers "B," and counters, "What's B supposed to be like?" Chae-hun answers, "I don't know. I just wanted to ask." The question echoes at the end of the film, after the two have consummated their relationship, when Chae-hun tries to remove the bloodstains from their hotel room sheets. Su-jŏng appears anxious; Chae-hun asks her, "You don't like to see me washing your blood out?" The questions accumulate throughout Hong's films, posed it seems into a vacuum, only to keep the silence from consuming the world. "This is Su-jŏng, right?" Chae-hun asks Su-jŏng while they are having sex.[10]

The railroad, cable, and telephone lines, lines of seduction, lines of defense, lines of communication and inquiry, and lines of escape crisscross the land-

scape of Hong's cinema, forming a vast but obsolete network; they carve up the spaces and times of this cinema into discrete, schizoid geographies and temporalities, forcing individuals to perpetually cross lines, cross the line, and double-cross one another. ("Why are you making me crazy?" Chae-hun lashes out at Sujŏng in *Virgin Stripped Bare*.) A tramcar in *Virgin Stripped Bare* hangs over the city, suspended en route during a power outage. (Hong uses the incident to divide the film in two and to repeat the narrative thus far from another perspective, rearranging the details, the nuances, and also the facts of the previous scenes.) Order and disorder, chaos and confinement, sequence and disjunction are no longer separated by lines of demarcation, but are spliced open by them, like the ill-fated Hyo-sŏp and Min-jae, who have been spliced apart and together by an illegible—and unlocatable—mixture of love, attachment, hostility, and dependence.

The despair that follows from the confusion of lines suffuses Hong's work, but always just below the surface; it never moves into a deeper, more profound (in both senses) state of despair, into anything resembling an essence of despair. A light despair that drizzles constantly on the films, lingering on the surface before sinking just below it, generates in Hong's cinema an atmosphere or affect of discomfort rather than tragedy, disappointment rather than rage. (Rain is another element that moves through Hong's work; it opens and closes *Turning Gate,* for example; Sanggwŏn leaves his umbrella in Professor Kim's apartment in *Kangwon Province*.) The light despair, unanswered questions, and ingestions generate a persistent disorientation, a sense of being lost in the world.

In the language of the sublime, the encounter with an impenetrable force, one that overwhelms the subject and forces it to recognize what Neil Hertz, following Kenneth Burke, calls an "end of the line," might apply to Hong's characters, who are faced repeatedly, it seems, with such aporias.[11] Hong's protagonists, all of whom share a set of similar features—a writer (*The Day a Pig Fell*), an academic (*Kangwon Province*), a filmmaker and a former art student (*Virgin Stripped Bare*), and an actor (*Turning Gate*), all in decline and searching for a way beyond an apparently existential impasse—can be seen, as David E. James remarked, as autobiographical surrogates of the filmmaker.[12] Each faces an obstacle, is turned away, and continues to fall, even when the tangible goal—deflowering, fucking, a teaching position—is achieved. The inevitable descent and increasing frustration that accompanies it each time might be seen as a form of a sublime blockage, a paralysis that follows from the collision with an impenetrable outside, except that Hong's films lack the affect, the feeling of irreversibility that typically envelops sublime art. Hong's characters play out a tragedy that never reaches the proportions of an epic; they turn away at the end of the line, never succumbing to the finitude. Hong's films are comic, impurely so, in the sense of Kafka's novels, farcical and rarely cathartic. Almost sublime, not quite sublime, virtually sublime, lacking an element (why not a letter?) of sublimity: *subline*. An embarrassing, awkward word born from the embarrassing awkward comedies that suffuse Hong's cinema. A disfigured neologism or simple mispronunciation, expressed in the underwhelming collapse of sublimity. Subline.

A subline cinema, nearly sublime but missing something essential that renders the whole ridiculous, if not absurd. The suffering is real but not great. The confusion palpable but not absolute. The chaos rampant but not annihilating. A light sublime, lower in calories, distasteful and unimpressive, subline. But the chaos is subdued by an order that manages somehow to connect persons, places, and narrative events. A network of submerged lines, barely perceptible, keeps the terrain intact, protecting the world from a deep and catastrophic underworld. Faced with an impasse, a limit, an aporia, Hong's characters turn around, turn their backs, turn away at the end of the line. Hong's cinema is not one of limits and ends, but of repetitions, returns, and resumed lines.

In the temporal and narrative disorder that structures Hong's films, the scattered, wandering, and lost lines and threads are drawn together by an uncanny, overdetermined sway. Over great distances, through a myriad of obstacles and labyrinthine passages, Hong's characters move toward one another, driven toward distinct points in space and time, but without any awareness of their destination. They arrive and fail to arrive through coincidences, accidents, and chance encounters. Like a form of perverse (or inverse) destiny (a destiny in reverse), the characters struggle to arrive at the place where they are supposed to be—"You in me. Me in you," as Myŏng-suk writes to Kyŏng-su, a message that, perhaps, he never sees. Inside each other, outside of themselves. Penetrating and penetrated, inside-out. A fantasy of communion, community, communication; of ecstasy if not of love.

In *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well,* an array of characters begins to assemble, across the divide of one significant narrative break, into an impossible whole. The impossibility and inevitable collision are mediated only at one moment, during Po-kyŏng's dream of her own funeral. Seeing no way out of her adulterous

affair with Hyo-sŏp and unable to love her husband, Po-kyŏng prepares to leave. The dream, unmarked in the film, opens onto the scene of Po-kyŏng's funeral. The audience assumes that she has taken her life. Po-kyŏng's (theatrical) gesture of self-sacrifice offers the possibility for unity, for a unified space where various lines finally converge. But this fantasy too falls apart when Po-kyŏng arises, in her dream, from the dead, only to then awaken from her dream and reenter the reality that presses ahead toward her destruction. Chi-suk and Sang-gwŏn, in *The Power of Kangwon Province,* brush past each other in the same space without encountering each other. Two camera angles in the train that takes Chi-suk and Sang-gwŏn separately to Kangwon Province locate the separated couple in the same place. Their simultaneity is also marked by a farcical background murder, which appears to have occurred during their visits. (Talk of the murder and periodic encounters with the woman-to-be-killed place Chi-suk and Sang-gwŏn in the same place at the same moment.) In the train, just feet apart, they are separated by a camera angle, by its line of vision.

Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors features a series of episodes that gradually begins to repeat from different perspectives and with major and minor changes to the actions and dialogue, some details missing, and other new ones added. The key series of repetitions begins when a tramcar is suspended with Su-jŏng inside. She hangs, suspended in the air, on this single line. *Turning Gate* introduces a narrative repetition and reversal as Kyŏng-su moves from Myŏng-suk to Sŏn-yŏng. In each of his narratives, Hong has placed lines through the spatial and temporal topography of his films; lines that lead his characters toward and away from one another, as well as lines that keep them insurmountably apart. The lines separate characters from each other but also the story from itself, the dramatic and temporal unity of the film from its completion. Narratives recounted in slices (of space and time). The dramatic shift in *Turning Gate,* in which Kyŏng-su moves from the pursued to pursuer, takes place on a train, which serves in the first instance as a line of escape, in the second as a line of seduction. It begins when Kyŏng-su gives a photograph of Myŏng-suk—a picture she had given him as a memento—to an unnamed man he meets in the dining car. Kyŏng-su is glancing without interest at her image when the man approaches him.

The scene takes the form of a series of questions. "Are you an artist?" the man asks Kyŏng-su. "Are you good at *go*?" Kyŏng-su counters, referring to the match underway in the car. Noticing the photograph of Myŏng-suk, the man asks Kyŏng-su, "Is she your girlfriend?" interrupting him just as he is about to read the inscription on the back. When Kyŏng-su tells the man no, he responds, "Then why do you carry that photograph?" Kyŏng-su offers him the image, without having read, it seems, the inscription on the back: "Would you like it?" "What for?" Kyŏng-su leaves the car; the man stares at the image, then reads the inscription on the back, which includes the line, "You in me. Me in you." The phrase evokes the end of a line, a merging of two people separated by an irreducible divide or line, a sexual but also psychological cut, a laceration that makes impossible the fusion that Myŏng-suk longs for. (Confusion in place of fusion.)

The phrase reappears in the Concord Hotel, on the occasion of Kyŏng-su and Sŏn-yŏng's liaison. It returns through Sŏn-yŏng, who has herself returned from Kyŏng-su's past, returned like the snake at Turning Gate, a metamorphosis of Myŏng-suk, to reclaim Kyŏng-su. Later, after their tryst, Kyŏng-su will discover Sŏn-yŏng's note, which contains Myŏng-suk's phrase, "You in me! Me in you!" now with exclamation points. Repetition with emphasis, or the emphasis of repetition? A ventriloquism. Sŏn-yŏng has become Myŏng-suk (or Myŏng-suk has returned in the body of Sŏn-yŏng, erupted like an alien from the inside), but Kyŏng-su has also become Myŏng-suk, like her, abandoned. She in her; he in her; she in him. No end in sight, no end of the line, which continues through each of them and out of sight. Many of Hong's characters are looking for the end, for some cessation of the trajectory that takes them endlessly somewhere, elsewhere, nowhere. In *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well,* Tong-u tells the prostitute in his hotel room, "I am trying to love you." ("Me too," she says.) They share a fantasy of love: "Me in you, you in me"; "the end of me in you, the end of you in me." Beneath the fantasy is an anxiety caused by the longing for some terminal site. "You don't love me, do you?" Myŏng-suk asks Kyŏng-su in *Turning Gate*. "What do you want me to say?" Kyŏng-su later asks Myŏng-suk on the telephone. Kyŏng-su too succumbs to the fantasy of closure, the desire for an end to the line. He reaches for this end when he asks Sŏn-yŏng in the hotel, "Want to die together?" A last appeal, perhaps, to sublimity.

The scene unfolds through a series of questions that begins with a discussion about Sŏn-yŏng's husband, whom Kyŏng-su believes he has seen with another woman, then about Sŏn-yŏng's breasts, and concludes with Kyŏng-su's proposed double suicide. The two are in bed together. "I love you," Kyŏng-su says. "Really?" Sŏn-yŏng answers. "There's nothing

more I can wish from a woman." A sustained pause, then, "Do you like my breasts?" "Yes, a lot." After a failed attempt at intercourse, Kyŏng-su asks, "Want to die together?" "Why?" Sŏn-yŏng responds. "I don't want sex anymore, just to die, pure and innocent." The failed intercourse triggers the mild wish to die in Kyŏng-su, "pure and innocent." But in a world in which characters return from the dead, resurface from film to film, move from one history to another, one world to another, "You in me/Me in you," death doesn't provide an end of the line, a terminus, or a destination. It only pushes the line temporarily underground, beneath the surface—a subline rather than sublime confrontation with finitude. Sŏn-yŏng never answers Kyŏng-su, and perhaps he realizes the insincerity of his appeal, and its futility. The scene ends when the camera cuts to an outdoor shot of the two, which begins the final sequence of the film.

No "after" in Hong's cinema, since there are no ends: only repetitions and resumptions.

If the fantasy of a sublime limit provides Kyŏng-su (and all of Hong's characters) with some comfort in his inert and inexpressive (unexpressed) life, the dream is rejected in the subsequent scene. Kyŏng-su and Sŏn-yŏng decide to have their fortunes told, although it's more Kyŏng-su's initiative than Sŏn-yŏng's and he has to persuade the inexplicably reluctant fortune-teller into helping them. Again, the exchange involves a series of questions. From outside her house, Kyŏng-su calls, "Do you read fortunes?" From the other side of the gate, off-screen, a woman responds, "Yes, why do you ask?" Kyŏng-su repeats the question: "Do you read fortunes? How much do you charge?" Fortune-teller: "Why? Why do you want it read? No need for it." Kyŏng-su: "How much do you charge?" Fortune-teller: "As much as you'd like. You don't seem to need it." She appears and opens the gate. Kyŏng-su turns to Sŏn-yŏng and asks, "Would you like to try?" as they enter the fortune-teller's courtyard.

The fortune, it turns out, divides Sŏn-yŏng from Kyŏng-su, propelling her and her husband toward immense fortune, the kind "it takes a decade to find." Sŏn-yŏng's luck "opens up from this year. Next year, all four gates will open." "All people of the secular world," she's told, "will look up to you." All of Sŏn-yŏng's gates are opened to the future; she has no need to turn around or away; she won't be turned away. Moreover, her good fortune is linked firmly to her relationship with her husband, who will also experience great prosperity and success. Kyŏng-su watches with a look first of hostility, then resignation, as the fortune-teller speaks of Sŏn-yŏng's relation to her husband: "Both of you were destined to experience early hardship. You have passed that. Now is the beginning." She concludes, "Support him well as a good wife." Kyŏng-su's half-hearted attempt to bind his future with Sŏn-yŏng in death is erased by this forecast, which offers Sŏn-yŏng a way out, a line through their impasse to the other side, a brighter future with her husband. A line, missing until now, to her husband. For Sŏn-yŏng, "Now is the beginning"; the end that Kyŏng-su proposes is his alone, not theirs. She has, in a sense, already left him behind. The end of his line is his only.

Barely able to conceal her pleasure, Sŏn-yŏng turns toward Kyŏng-su and asks the fortune-teller, "What about him?" The fortune-teller responds cryptically, with a question: "I've already read his, haven't I?" She continues, "His fate is like a Buddhist priest, destined to turn his back to the secular world. He has bad ties with others and foresees three years of bad luck." The separation between them is complete. Sŏn-yŏng is headed upward toward the good future that "hovers" above her; Kyŏng-su is headed in the opposite direction, downward and away. His "bad ties with others," the bad lines that bind him to the secular world, require him to turn his back like a Buddhist priest, to turn back at the end of the line. He is abject and subline.

The final scenes of *Turning Gate* dramatize in dialogue and form the trope of lines and their ends. As they leave the fortune-teller, Sŏn-yŏng, still buoyed by news of her imminent prosperity, walks briskly ahead of Kyŏng-su, who stops and stands still. The camera also stops and remains on Kyŏng-su, while Sŏn-yŏng walks out of the frame. From off-screen she asks, "Aren't you coming?" When he doesn't answer, she reenters the frame and asks, with a look of concern, "What's wrong?" Kyŏng-su's response is a question: "Where are you going?" She looks away, around, and then shaking her head says, "I'm leaving." She walks away and this time the camera follows her in a pan. Halfway to the edge of the frame, Sŏn-yŏng stops, her back still turned to the camera, and touches her face. With a burst of resolve, she *turns around* and runs back toward Kyŏng-su. The camera follows her again with a pan until she reaches Kyŏng-su, who has not moved.

"Will you wait for me?" she asks, "I'll return with some money." "Will you?" he says. Sŏn-yŏng smiles, "Wait for me here," and *turns away* again. She runs off-screen for the second time. The camera remains on Kyŏng-su, who has not moved during the entire scene, before it pans after Sŏn-yŏng, catching her in the distance just before she disappears. Which point on this line is her end, Kyŏng-su or her home and husband? And which turn—toward or away from Kyŏng-su—is the more significant gesture?

The film cuts to a POV shot of the fortune-teller, seen through her gate as she puts away her instruments after the reading. The reaction shot shows a hostile Kyŏng-su peering through the gate. Another cut: first to a treetop set against a stormy sky, then to a medium shot of Kyŏng-su leaning against a wall, waiting. He looks down at his palm as it begins to rain, and then walks off after Sŏn-yŏng. The camera follows him, repeating Sŏn-yŏng's exit. The scene cuts to the outer gate of her house; Kyŏng-su enters the frame from the right. The rain is heavier now, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Kyŏng-su walks to the gate and tries to peer through the closed doors. A large burst of thunder. Kyŏng-su lingers in front of the door, his head down, then appears to realize something. Slowly but resolutely, he walks away from Sŏn-yŏng's house, toward the camera at an oblique angle, and out of the frame, to the right where he had entered. The shot of the gate holds steady for another 30 seconds before the credits begin.

Kyŏng-su has been turned away from Sŏn-yŏng's closed gate in a reenactment of the legend of Turning Gate, replete with a thunderstorm. What he has realized, perhaps, is the irony of his repetition, of his fate that is always to turn away, to turn his back on the world. Kyŏng-su is unable to find closure, a resolution of the crisis that separates him from others, from the world, but most importantly from himself. It is the sublime dilemma that confronts each of the male protagonists in Hong's four films. But, there is no sublime annihilation at the limit, no sense of an epic struggle—only the option of turning around at the end of the line and moving elsewhere. Kyŏng-su's gesture at the end of the film also repeats Sŏn-yŏng's in the previous scene, trapping him within a *mise-en-abîme* of repetitions, endless returns to and from the end of the line. Her turn and return to him is now understood as a break from him, a rupture, the end of her line with him. She has crossed over or passed through; he has turned away, and is turned away. Unable to lose himself in the sublime limit, to be destroyed by it, Kyŏng-su is left with only an irreducible irony, a tear through the center of his existence. He is left over, an afterthought. Neil Hertz says of those moments that follow the end of the line:

> I have said little so far about what becomes of these moments, of what comes *after* the end of the line. For there is always an "after": the structures we have been examining never coincide with the conclusions of particular texts in which they figure. Typically, the poised relationship of attenuated subject and divided object reveals its inherent instability by breaking down and giving way to scenarios more or less violent, in which the aggressive reassertion of the subject's stability is bought at some other's expense.[13]

In Hertz's readings of sublime moments, the ends of the line provide an occasion for the subject to reassert its stability violently, usually at "some other's expense." The subject resolves the irony (the distance from oneself) by repairing the division that has separated the self from itself, by returning to itself, becoming oneself again. Suturing and reconnecting the divided selves into a whole. Those ends of the line, says Hertz, never "coincide with the conclusions of particular texts in which they figure." Something comes afterward, an opportunity to recover from the encounter. A survival of it. But in Hong's cinema, the end of the line is indefinite, suspended, like the tramcar in which Su-jŏng sits, in perpetually irony: a line that never ends. No "after" in Hong's cinema, since there are no ends: only repetitions and resumptions. In this sense, the "postpolitical" nature of Hong's cinema and Hong's era comes not so much with the end of politics but with the unending nature of his politics, with the endless politics that continue to come after the end of politics. Like the questions that come from and return to a void, the characters in Hong Sangsoo's cinema never reach the end, never have the opportunity for a true moment of sublimity; they only turn away and retrace their steps on lines that never end.

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revised essay was written without the benefit of access to the Korean language, and the particular idiom of Hong Sangsoo's work, which is apparent even without knowledge of the language. The speculations, formulations, and assertions in this piece are therefore limited to dialogue in translation and to observations from an irreducible distance. I am especially grateful to Kyung Hyun Kim, who generously acted as interlocutor and critic. I would like to thank Hong Sangsoo and Baek Moonim for additional suggestions and elucidations. An earlier version appeared in Korean translation in *Kangwondo ŭi him,* ed. Yonsei University Media Art Center (Seoul: Sam-in, 2003). I have used the standardized orthography for Korean words, but retained Hong Sangsoo's preferred spelling of his own name.

Notes

1. Kyung Hyun Kim describes the moment of Hong's appearance in the mid-1990s: "Hong Sang-su became a local film critic's favorite at a time when Korea had passed through its most intense political period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. No longer were masses of protesters committing self-immolation, dissenters being tortured and killed, and sightings of an army in riot gear everyday instances in Seoul. The revolutionary fervor that swept the nation had faded into a melancholic memory. The year of Hong's debut, 1996, is around the period when questions like 'After politics, what next?' became fashionable" (Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004], 208).
2. Hong's fifth film—released right on schedule in 2004—is called *Woman Is the Future of Man* (*Yŭja nŭn namja ŭi miraeda*).
3. During a visit to the University of California, Irvine, in October 2002, Hong was asked at a screening who his influences were, which filmmakers he admired most. When asked specifically about Asian filmmakers, Hong remarked that he wasn't familiar with most contemporary Asian filmmakers, but that he loved the work of Ozu. He added that Ozu was the only filmmaker whose work he liked in its entirety—every film.
4. Kyung Hyun Kim has offered a thorough analysis of this scene in his paper on Hong Sangsoo, "The Accidental Flâneur." The aggressive line of inquiry begins only after Kyŏng-su's fascination with the woman's legs interrupts the man, who has been aggressively questioning his companion about her lack of communication while away in Seoul. See Kyung Hyun Kim, "Too Early/Too Late: Temporality and Repetition in Hong Sang-su's Films," in *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema,* 203-30.
5. Slavoj Žižek says, "One usually considers masturbation an imaginary sexual act, i.e., an act where bodily contact with a partner is only imagined; would it not be possible to reverse the terms and to think of the sexual act proper, the act with an actual partner, as a kind of 'masturbation with a real (instead of only imagined) partner?'" ("From Virtual Reality to the Virtualization of Reality," in *Electronic Culture: Technology and Visual Representation,* ed. Timothy Druckrey [New York: Aperture, 1996], 295).
6. She later poses the same question to him in a different episode, across the divide of the narrative break. In each instance, Chae-hun gives the same response, "Five bottles of *soju,* three bottles of whiskey."
7. From the English subtitles. Kyung Hyun Kim translates this line as: "Breathe deeply, let us wait just a little bit longer." In the Korean original: "Chogŭmman tŏ kin hohŭp ŭro kidarija."
8. Another possibility, although only in the English translation, is the often-cited etymology that connects "monster" with "demonstration," "montrer" (French, "to show"), and by extension, monstrosity to expression. Also, something "marvelous," and a "warning."
9. The Temple of the Turning Gate is an actual location in the film. Kyŏng-su and Sŏng-u intend to visit the temple, but for reasons not entirely clear, turn away just before reaching the tourist site. Hong reproduces the legend at the end of his film, when Kyŏng-su is turned away from Sŏn-yŏng at the entrance to her house, during a fierce thunderstorm, as the legend recounts.
10. The question is motivated by the fact that Chae-hun had accidentally referred to Su-jŏng by another name, "Chŏng-a." But the pretense does not relieve the disoriented and disorienting nature of Chae-hun's appeal.
11. In *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), Neil Hertz develops a theory of sublime subjectivity that erupts when the subject is faced with an insurmountable obstacle, usually, as it happens, a displaced version of itself. In successive readings of Longinus, Wordsworth, Kant, Flaubert, George Eliot, Freud, Courbet, Medusa, Paul de Man, and many others, Hertz discovers such moments, which he calls "the end of the line." They are autobiographical moments, says Hertz, in which the subject encounters an unrecognizable and often horrific version of itself, returning a glare from the outside. They are sublime, according to Hertz, because the subject cannot proceed any further and is forced to turn away and, like the various figures of Hong's *Turning Gate,* retreat.
12. David E. James suggested this to Hong Sangsoo at the "Tell Me that You Love Me" symposium, adding that Kyŏng-su in *Turning Gate* even bears a physical resemblance to Hong. Hong neither agreed with nor denied James's assertion that each of Hong's protagonists are figures of the filmmaker himself, but noted that he wrote about characters and occupations with which he was familiar. The surrogate, says Neil Hertz, is an integral feature of sublime literature: "What is repeatedly represented, at the end of the line, is a practically (but not quite) dispensable 'subject' confronting a split or doubled 'object'" (Hertz, *End of the Line,* 222).
13. Ibid., 223 (original emphasis).

Abstract This article looks at the first four films of contemporary Korean filmmaker Hong Sangsoo. It seeks in particular to explore Hong's use of "lines" as geographical and behavioral figures that chart the contemporary landscape of South Korea at a complex moment in its history. The lines that traverse Hong's world produce a cinema of tangled webs and knotted relations.

Al McKee

Buster's Hat

Disappointment is a given when you finally get around to seeing a movie you've been hearing about for 30 years. After such a long wait, the burden of anticipation is too great, your preconceptions too fixed, for the film to have anything like its intended impact. If it's a comedy, you've already heard the best jokes. If it's a thriller, you already know the plot. If there's an extraordinary performance in it or an especially stunning scene, you'll be expecting something twice as strong. Under such circumstances, even a classic will seem faded. And if the film was nothing much to begin with, the imbalance between expectation and reality may wash it out altogether.

Not long ago, at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, I saw the film that Samuel Beckett made with Buster Keaton in New York in 1964, a little picture I've been wanting to see pretty much all of my movie-going life. It's called *Film,* and though it runs no more than 22 minutes, it occupies a unique position in cinema history as the only movie made with Beckett's active participation and as one of the last to feature Keaton in a major role. My curiosity about it was based, perhaps ghoulishly, on the legend of its troubled birth (shot in a withering heat wave during Beckett's only trip to America), its disastrous reception at the 1965 New York Film Festival (where the audience stood and booed), and most of all, the signature imprint of its eerie production stills. Anyone with an interest in either artist has undoubtedly seen these pictures: Keaton in an overcoat running alongside a brick wall. Or Keaton staring into the camera, a patch over one eye, his mouth open in shock. Those two images have always projected a sinister ambiguity —who is he running *from*? what is he staring *at*? So the Yerba Buena screening—the finale to a program of several short films—offered me more than just a chance to see a rare item; it offered the solution to a 30-year mystery.

The film begins with some promise: an extreme close-up of Buster Keaton's closed eyelid, rough as a crocodile's skin, then his open eye, then a traveling shot over the surface of an equally rough brick wall. This rhyming of textures suggests the exercise will be at least visually interesting, and the shot of Keaton running next to the wall has a cramped, tortured quality that is recognizably Beckett's. But the shot after that steers the film into a ditch: Keaton's character (observed from behind through all but the last of the 22 minutes) runs past a man and a woman studying a newspaper who watch him go by, then turn and peer into the pursuing camera with a look of . . . well, I know from Beckett's published notes that it is supposed to be agony, but that is hardly the expression that comes across on screen. Outrage, perhaps? Dismay? The scene is so badly acted, the couple so crudely costumed and directed, that whatever brief illusion of a self-contained world the first seconds of the film have created is undone. Here we have the impact of big reputations on a little movie. While the performances in *Film* may be no worse than those in a typical Warhol epic, the names Beckett and Keaton raise expectations

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for a level of professionalism not usually demanded of the avant-garde.

That's also true of the way the film looks. *Film*'s cinematographer, Boris Kaufman, had shot Jean Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* and Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront,* but the pictorial quality here, the front-and-center staging and unnuanced lighting, reminded me of nothing so much as 1960s television. The couple with the newspaper was positioned like set-ups in a comedy sketch—was it Harvey Korman and Carol Burnett? And moments later, when Keaton, who had ducked into a building, avoids an old woman coming down the stairs, I could have sworn it was Aunt Bee from "The Andy Griffith Show." For the rest of the film, the camera spies on Keaton, alone in a room, as he attempts to shut out all the "eyes" that are trained on him—the dog's, the bird's, the cat's, the eyes in a picture hanging on the wall, the "eyes" he detects in the filigree carving of his rocking chair. Exhausted, he falls asleep in his chair, waking to find his own face looking at him—finally, Buster Keaton's face!—whereupon he registers a look of . . . well, again, I know from Beckett's notes what it is *supposed* to be.

"What I think it means is that a man can keep away from everybody, but he can't get away from himself," Buster Keaton said in Tom Dardis' 1979 biography, *Keaton: The Man Who Wouldn't Lie Down*. Beckett and his director, Alan Schneider, disparaged Keaton's understanding of the project ("Buster is here parading his incomprehension," Beckett wrote to Schneider of a screening at the Paris Cinémathèque in 1965), but Beckett's own explanation, as expressed in notes to Schneider, merely dressed the same notion in fancier clothes. "To be is to be perceived" was his theme—or as Beckett gussied it up in Latin: "Esse est percipi." A basic tenet of the eighteenth-century Irish philosopher (and fellow Trinity College alumnus) George Berkeley, the idea acquired, in Beckett's hands (and in Keaton's), a predictable edge: to be perceived is to suffer. Keaton's character in the film eludes the scrutiny of everyone he encounters; he covers the window, puts the dog and the cat outside, covers the fishbowl, covers the bird cage, takes down the staring face of God, blocks every possible avenue of perception and is left with . . . himself: self-perception, the relentless pursuer that has dogged him throughout the film. As the basis for a movie, this could be a bit of a snore, but in the context of Beckett's extreme shyness and emerging fame, it might—given a more confident presentation—have had some snap.

A cryptic narrative need not impair our enjoyment of a film provided its internal logic is discernible and its execution sufficiently skilled—David Lynch's *Eraserhead* comes to mind, or Jan Svankmajer's *Little Otik,* or the haunting Fabergé-egg animations of the Brothers Quay. But Beckett's *Film* never approaches that level. Its macabre aura isn't strong enough to overcome our desire to understand what's going on, and without the crib sheet of its author's notes, we don't get enough from the screen to figure it out for ourselves. Beckett hinted at this in a letter he wrote to Alan Schneider after viewing the newly edited film in 1964: "It does I suppose in a sense fail with reference to a purely intellectual schema," he wrote, but nevertheless, he assured Schneider, the "beauty, power and strangeness of image" were sufficient to carry the movie. Like all beginning filmmakers, he had fallen in love with his footage, unaware, apparently, that the filmmaking was too clumsy, the images not strange enough, to compensate for a "schema" which, if it *had* been clearly communicated, would have been revealed for the dull brief it was. A flop, then. A pretentious embarrassment. A student film made by a genius. And yet . . .

Leaving the Yerba Buena Center that night, I didn't feel particularly let down. Bad movies sometimes acquire an oblique value by becoming unintentional documentaries of the period they represent or the circumstances under which they are made. At that level, *Film* was more than interesting—it had some of the casual cruelty and comic bleakness to be expected from the author of *Endgame* and *Krapp's Last Tape*.

Perhaps because in photographs their stark visages appear to be carved from the same raw timber, the pairing of Samuel Beckett and Buster Keaton seems, at first, inspired. In fact, it was a mismatch. As artists they had almost nothing in common, and their lives, at the time they collaborated, were moving in opposite directions. Beckett's success was newly minted. After decades of obscurity, poverty, and struggle, he was coming to terms with a new form of torment: fame. Keaton's big splash was 40 years in the past. This difference alone would have been sufficient to complicate a partnership, but creative temperament formed another gulf. Beckett painted small—two or three characters on a set profoundly stalled. Keaton favored epics—his most memorable gags involved locomotive chases and houses blowing down. That the theater's poet laureate of paralysis should unite with the most agile of all silent film comics seems, in retrospect, perverse. But the deepest gulf between them may have been caste.

Though he commonly wrote about derelicts and fools, "commonly" was not Samuel Beckett's adverb.

In many ways he was the essential highbrow: a university-trained scholar and poet, an Irishman who wrote in French, a playwright who abjured show biz. "As you know, Beckett has never sat through any of his plays in the presence of an audience," Kenneth Tynan complained to the actor and director George Devine in 1964, after Beckett's notes on staging had made a production of *Play* at the National Theatre (where Tynan was literary manager) nearly unintelligible. Beckett never saw the 1956 New York production of *Waiting for Godot* that famously featured Bert Lahr as Estragon (and that made his name in America), but his impression was of "a dreadfully wrong and vulgar production." Throughout his career, directors presenting his difficult texts consistently used actors with unusually strong audience rapport—Bert Lahr, Tom Ewell, Jack MacGowran, Hume Cronyn, Billie Whitelaw, Peggy Ashcroft—and Beckett's stage directions sought, equally consistently, to subvert that rapport.

Buster Keaton certainly belongs on that list of performers, though in his case (as in Lahr's) he seems to have been cast not for what he could do, but for what he was. The aging comic as a totem of loss and despair proved irresistible to more than one Beckett interpreter, but in practical terms, it created problems. A comic, after all—even one who is old and tired—lives to clown. Keaton's other film appearances in the mid-1960s (in *Beach Blanket Bingo* and *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini*) are often cited as evidence of how far he had fallen, but, in spirit, they were closer to his own work than *Film*. Keaton, who grew up on the vaudeville stage (and never went to school), embodied the blackened-fingernail tradition of the native inventor, the artist who wants to know what works. He measured his success pragmatically, in laughs. That aesthetic was about as far from Beckett's as could be imagined, and it accounts for much of what made their relationship problematic.

Beckett's biographers tend to portray the collaboration, at least in its early stages, as a catastrophe of etiquette: Beckett kindly and solicitous, Keaton distant and taciturn. Drawing on the essay Alan Schneider wrote to accompany the published scenario of *Film,* they invariably evoke parallels to scenes out of *Sunset Boulevard*: Keaton in Los Angeles puttering around a house full of relics from the 1920s, professing bafflement at the Beckett script, then offering to punch it up, make it funnier. Schneider alarmed: "I said that we didn't normally pad Beckett's material." Later, Keaton in New York morosely watching baseball on TV, while Schneider and Beckett try—unsuccessfully—to draw him into conversation. As they get up to leave, he proposes wearing one of his own hats in the film—another crisis for Schneider. Beckett saves the day with a small compromise: he agrees to let Buster wear the hat. In *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (1978), author Dierdre Bair includes a third scene, describing how during the location shoot the cast and crew repaired each night to an Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village:

> Beckett, Coffey [the camera operator], Schneider—whoever was there—sat at one table, Keaton usually sat alone at another. Throughout the evenings, Beckett stole surreptitious glances in Keaton's direction while Keaton only had eyes for the checkered tablecloth and his bottle of beer.

When I read these accounts, I must say my sympathies fly to Buster Keaton. Surely the subtext here is apparent: an uneducated man among intellectuals, a man down on his luck among people flush with projects and plans, a professional subordinate to amateurs. Buster Keaton knew more about film than the makers of *Film* ever would, but his employers were not interested in this knowledge, hadn't hired him for it, didn't welcome his suggestions.

Yet the shared ordeal of making a movie drew them closer. In his essay, Schneider characterizes the change as Keaton warming to the project, but it's clear that Schneider the first-time director and Beckett the first-time screenwriter came to appreciate the value of having a lead actor who knew his way around a film set. Some of this appreciation stemmed from simple gratitude. Here is Schneider after the difficult first day of shooting:

> The one thing I was sure of was that Buster was turning out to be magnificent. He was totally professional: patient, unperturbable, relaxed, easy to tell something to, helpful, there. He must have been over seventy, but he never complained for a single moment.

And, of course, he was a movie star.

Forty years later, Buster Keaton's presence is all that remains of *Film*. The "intellectual schema," Beckett's dry-as-dust theme, now flaps in the wind like the banner at an abandoned circus. As an audience we only have eyes for Buster, even if it's mostly his back. The high point of the movie on the night I saw it, the only moment that raised a titter from the audience, was the bit where Keaton tries to put out the dog and the cat. As the dog goes out, the cat comes in; as the cat goes out, the dog comes in. It's the sort of gag you might expect from one of Keaton's two-reelers, and you can

see in his movements an echo of those days. The sequence sticks out so dramatically from the rest of the film that I assumed it was Keaton's contribution, but no, it is there in the original scenario. Beckett even drew a little diagram mapping the back-and-forth repetitions. It's an indication of what might have been possible had the artists bridged their various gulfs. It is also a succinct illustration of a principle that explains why most of us, whatever our claims to elevated sentiments, respond most warmly to the basics: to sex, to the body, to punctured pretense and common sense, to dogs and cats. That's how the plain-speaking movies became the great populist art form of the twentieth century, and how someone like Buster Keaton, with no formal education, had as much impact on his corner of world culture as Samuel Beckett, of Trinity College, had on his.

So after 30 years, *Film* turns out to be worth the wait. Not a disappointment. Or perhaps I should say, not *only* a disappointment. If the movie Samuel Beckett thought he was making proves tedious and amateurish, the unintentional documentary he actually made breaks your heart. It's the story of a man who, many years ago, mastered an art form that ceased to exist, and was obliged, late in life, to pick up such jobs as he could find. One of these jobs returns him to the silent film, but the people making it use his talents in baffling ways: they keep his famous face averted from the camera; they run him over an obstacle course encumbered in an overcoat on the hottest day of summer; they inhibit his movements and squelch his spontaneity; and when, at the end of the film, they allow him finally to look into the lens, they violate his signature 60-year deadpan by having him register horror and shock. Through it all Keaton maintains the dignity that is common to Beckett's characters, enduring the inexplicable by clinging to vestiges of an understood past: the professional pride of doing what's required, the muscle-memory of a slapstick shuffle, the comfort of a trademark, an emblem of better days—his hat.

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Abstract The collaboration of Samuel Beckett and Buster Keaton on the 1964 short Film is one of those match-ups that sound rich with promise. But their marriage proved brief and problematic. This article examines how creative cross-purposes turned Beckett's only movie and one of Keaton's last into an absurdist comedy of talents misapplied.

Reviews

Turning Gate

Director: Hong Sangsoo. Producers: Ahn Byoung-joo; Choi In-gi; Lee Hanna. Writer: Hong. Cinematographer: Choi Yeong-taek. Editor: Ham Sung-won. Cinema Service.

In Korean director Hong Sangsoo's fourth film, *Turning Gate* (*Saenghwal ŭi palgyŏn,* 2002), Kyŏng-su, an actor in the midst of a career change from stage to film, finds himself caught between jobs. As the film opens, he receives a phone call from his director friend informing him that he's been fired— blamed for the box-office failure of his last film. He visits the production office to pick up the one million Won (about U.S. $1000) in residuals guaranteed by his contract, but the director insists that it would be unethical for Kyŏng-su to accept it because the movie has flopped so badly. Their friendship is jeopardized the moment Kyŏng-su insists on taking the money. The director then warns him, "It is difficult to be human, but let's try not to become monsters." This satirical statement announces one of the film's central themes: Kyŏng-su's struggle between "human" and "monster."

Ironically, by being fired, Kyŏng-su has earned himself some free time, and he travels to Ch'un-ch'ŏn, a three-hour train ride from Seoul, to see an old writer friend, Sŏng-u, before visiting his family in Pusan. His assumption of this nomadic identity allows the story to find some space in a modern world divided between routine drudgery, family responsibility, and sleep. In other words, the narrative space of *Turning Gate* escapes conventional causality through Kyŏng-su's temporary freedom from work. The film then follows the aimless trajectory of its idealistic protagonist as he pursues the meaning of life. (The direct translation of the film's Korean title is "Discovery of Life.") Released from work and from the bustle of the city, Kyŏng-su now has time to indulge his capriciousness and idealism.

The main characters of all Hong Sangsoo's films are at some point humiliated, and Kyŏng-su is no exception.[1] His idealism and obstinacy may be noble, but

Kyŏng-su (Sang-kyung Kim) and Sŏn-yŏng (Sang-mi Chu) confront each other in *Turning Gate*.

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he is really a person who—as a fortuneteller tells him—"cannot easily blend with the others." He resists love when it is offered to him, yet clamors for it when it is denied. In Ch'un-ch'ŏn, Kyŏng-su meets a dancer, Myŏng-suk. Despite the fact that his friend Sŏng-u already fancies her, Kyŏng-su sleeps with Myŏng-suk without guilt—or love. Myŏng-suk has already seen Kyŏng-su several times on screen, and has fallen helplessly in love with him. But her attempts to gain his affection fail miserably. Kyŏng-su leaves Ch'un-ch'ŏn; Myŏng-suk remains behind, her eyes swollen from weeping. But Kyŏng-su will soon feel the same pangs of unrequited love. On the next leg of his train journey to Pusan he meets Sŏn-yŏng, an attractive young woman who is traveling home to Kyŏng-ju, an ancient capital of Korea. Obsessively drawn to her, Kyŏng-su gets off at her station and surreptitiously follows her home.

Since he has no plan and only a vague idea of a possible seduction, this unscheduled stop releases Kyŏng-su from the line of the plot and the chain of dramatic causality. In a conventional film that continues to manifest dominant language through the pleasure of guessing the objects of gazes, what will happen in the subsequent shot is sometimes more important than the present shot. Kyŏng-su, however, is unconstrained by plot concerns because the film has refused to develop situations and characters for the sake of advancing the narrative.

Kyŏng-su is not just a lonely traveler, he is also an outsider, a man from the city in a small town where he is not particularly welcome. Although he finds out not only where Sŏn-yŏng lives, but also that she is married, he has yet to make up his mind about what to do next. He checks into a cheap boarding house, and then takes a walk to a part of the city where tourists rarely visit. He nonchalantly enters a ramshackle yet crowded barbeque restaurant, where he orders some *kopch'ang* (beef intestines) to grill at the table and a bottle of *soju* that brings him to the verge of intoxication.

"What were you looking at?" asks a young man whose thick provincial accent clearly marks him as someone rooted in this traditional, conservative town. He is upset that Kyŏng-su has been staring at his girlfriend's legs. Kyŏng-su, rudely awakened from his reverie, denies the charge, replying meekly, "What . . . me? Nothing. I wasn't looking at anything." But despite his denial—he maintains that he had been checking out a poster pinned right above the woman's head—the audience already senses his guilt. His feeble lie exasperates the other man. Irritation is soon transformed into rage, producing obscenities—"Where are your fucking manners?"—and insults directed at Kyŏng-su, a stranger who has violated the local code of ethics (although the angry diner seems to have lost all sense of decency himself as well). Fortunately, the quarrel does not explode into physical violence after the woman begs her boyfriend to calm down.

Though deeply textured with action and drama, this scene—shot in a single take—achieves a sense of emptiness by detaching itself from the rest of the narrative. Instead of further suturing the drama, it almost propels the audience out of it. Ironically, it also releases the viewers from the narrative's structural tyranny, forcing them to explore the details of the space, the community, in which Kyŏng-su finds himself, and the intricacies of the drama to be found there—beyond the primary one. This shift in focus from the protagonist to other diners may remind us of Godard films, in which minor characters seated in a café divert attention away from the main characters—see, for instance, *Masculine-Feminine* (1966). Unlike the Jean-Pierre Léaud character in that film, however, Kyŏng-su stays in the frame even when his role is that of voyeur and eavesdropper, thus minimizing the potential rupture to the drama caused by introducing tangential characters.

The visual composition of the shot—which places Kyŏng-su dining in the foreground, the male diner and his girlfriend seated in the mid-field of the frame, and a crummy poster pinned up on an otherwise blank wall in the background—offers the viewer a series of visuals. Though Kyŏng-su's focus is on the woman's legs, which means that at least some of the viewers will follow the line of his gaze, the audience is also free to focus on other sections of the frame. The beauty of the woman's legs does not control the mood and the impulse of the entire scene, though it is the main reason why Kyŏng-su gets into trouble. Had the scene been broken up into fetishistic close-ups and the conventional shot/reverse shot structure, it would be far more scandalous than it is now. The long take not only leaps over the constraints of the narrative and diverts the audience's gaze to different aspects of the mise-en-scène, it also serves as a temporal guide through the process of Kyŏng-su's awkwardness: first, the stage of initial desire (looking at the woman's legs), then guilt (for having looked), and finally obsessive denial (insisting that he was looking at a poster on the wall). The entire scene—shot in real time, in a simple long shot, with very little camera movement—is critical to diversifying the audience's gaze.

Kyŏng-su in his struggle against the world . . .

In this one single shot, the film goes beyond telling one single story or one single action. The characters in the background do not help Kyŏng-su realize his main objective in Kyŏng-ju, and will not again appear in the film. (They do have a brief conversation: "In a day made up of 24 hours, couldn't you possibly spare ten minutes to make one simple phone call?" the male diner asks in his thick accent before catching sight of Kyŏng-su. The woman—also with the same accent—replies, "I was too busy. . . . I am sure that you understand.")

In fact, the restaurant scene is, at first glance, almost "wasteful" in its failure to further the narrative. It says little, for instance, about how Kyŏng-su will go about executing his plan to seduce Sŏn-yŏng. The film is half over, and yet we are still unsure of what is in store for us. At this moment, narrative time is temporally halted. By introducing these minor characters, the rigid convention of a narrative structure is cracked open, serving both to underscore Kyŏng-su's dreamy state and to awaken him from it. Hong Sangsoo's narratives often seem overwhelmed by an atmospheric mood made up of the ambivalence and fragility of friendship, the random experiencing of trivial matters, and the struggle against ennui. Plot has only a small place in this environment. The excesses, the halting of the narrative time, the conversations that often trail off all contribute to creating a mood of awkwardness that is typical of Hong's films.

Indeed, Hong's characters are sometimes forced to talk only to avoid the awkwardness of silence, not because they have anything compelling to say. The essence of the pure sign or the pure sound rendered in his films is therefore tempered by stripping it of reason, meaning, and thematic motivation. The post-ideological fervor of the post-1980s—when the student protests in Korea were as intense, if not more so, than those that took place in 1960—contextualizes the somber mood that has enveloped of Hong's films since *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* (*Tweji ga umul e ppajin nal,* 1996).[2] One of Hong Sangsoo's typical post-political cynicisms is delivered toward the end of the film, when Kyŏng-su tells Sŏn-yŏng that he doesn't subscribe to the view that men can actually live selflessly for the sake of improving the lives of others.

Korean critics have long been fascinated by the way in which the audiences of Hong Sangsoo's films

become as awkward as his characters. The instances when Hong's protagonists are revealed to be all-too-human, capable of telling lies, getting drunk, and becoming embarrassed, are sometimes boldly told without any excesses of genre, stripping away the comfort zone between the fictive elements and the audience. (Though none of his four features has been a major local box-office hit, they have all been highly praised by critics.) A major trait in Hong's films is his ability to release the tension between his characters not through their reconciliation, but through the acknowledgment of the impossibility of reconciliation. For instance, in the restaurant scene, the male diner's refusal to buy Kyŏng-su's excuse that he was looking at a poster causes the tension between the two to escalate. However, the threat of the fight is resolved when the diner realizes that Kyŏng-su is a fool not even worth fighting. Kyŏng-su, still in a dreamy and drunken state, does not retreat from his insistence that he was looking at the poster rather than the woman. He walks up to the *ajumma,* the owner of the restaurant, and demands to know where he can buy the poster, which is in fact little more than a giveaway ad for an alcoholic beverage. When he refuses to abandon his position, awkwardness is transformed into the audience's pitying laughter. No matter what Kyŏng-su does to try to reclaim his integrity, he will be further ridiculed by the two diners and also by the audience. The more he tries to protest, the more he loses face and the more distance he creates between himself and the world that fails to understand him.

This decentering of subjectivity, through which the protagonist becomes humiliated, serves as an underlying theme in *Turning Gate,* which constantly places Kyŏng-su in awkward positions. He assumes the role of the flâneur, who meanders through the city looking for excitement only to fall into a pit of paradox between the public and the private. Kyŏng-su's appetite for beauty finds him trying desperately to steal a look at a woman's legs and then even more desperate to deny that act. Though he didn't commit a crime, he has violated the couple's privacy and the code of decency

Sŏn-yŏng and Kyŏng-su visit the fortune teller (right).

that regulates people's behavior in a public space. I use the word "violation" to focus not only on Kyŏng-su's attempt to peek, but also on our eavesdropping on the private conversation between the two diners.

The man who confronts Kyŏng-su is upset not only because of Kyŏng-su's act of "looking" at his girlfriend's legs but also because of his violation of the couple's privacy. Kyŏng-su as a city dweller is already a threat simply by being there. But is he to be morally deplored for appreciating the beauty of a woman's legs? What about the position of the tranquil camera? If the mise-en-scène is constructed as a long take, is the perception of the audience's gaze differently figured than it would be by a mise-en-scène that induces voyeuristic scopophilia? What about the act of eavesdropping on the private conversation between the two? Since the couple is external to the narrative, aren't we—the film's audience—also implicated? And finally, if the diners don't want other people to hear them talk about their private lives, why are they sitting and talking in a restaurant where the rest of us can hear them? These questions open up the very interstices set forth by the film's paradoxes, where the line between the public and the private are constantly crashing and eroding.

Like Yasujiro Ozu, whose films "pick[ed] out the intolerable from the insignificant itself,"[3] the simplistic quality of life Hong Sangsoo depicts cannot easily be separated from anxiety and torment. Kyŏng-su, who is a transcendental, idealistic being, constantly finds himself struggling against the world. He refuses to fall in love with Myŏng-suk, the dance teacher who desires him, only to find himself in an unenviable situation with Sŏn-yŏng, a married woman who must be "stolen" from her family. Yet, like his pathetic attempt to persuade others that he was looking at something other than a woman's legs, Kyŏng-su's efforts to woo Sŏn-yŏng are also doomed to failure. He has to endure several days of waiting for her to make up her mind.

During this waiting period, the film's theme of not "turning into monsters" begins to act upon Kyŏng-su, and ultimately transforms him. It's interesting that the film recounts the seventh-century legend of the turning gate as a prelude to his metamorphosis. As told by Kyŏng-su's writer friend when Kyŏng-su visits a temple in Ch'un-ch'ŏn, the legend of the turning gate is derived from an ill-fated love affair between a common man and a princess of the Tang dynasty in China. Upon learning that a man of ordinary rank has dared to seek his daughter, the Emperor Tae-tsung orders that the admirer's head be cut off. But the dead man is reincarnated as a giant serpent that wraps itself around the princess' body. Desperate to free herself from the "man-who-has-become-a-serpent," the princess seeks an advice from a priest, who tells her to visit a temple in Korea. Once there, she begs the serpent for permission to enter the temple to get some food. The snake waits for the princess for some time, then, tired of waiting, he tries to enter the gate, only to be turned away by well-timed lightning and thunder.

As if to resurrect the legend, the story in Kyŏng-ju follows the process in which Kyŏng-su walks a perilous path and sinks to a form that is less than human. By the end of the film, he has begun his transformation into a monster, a process of "becoming" articulated by Gilles Deleuze when he writes of "the sense in which becoming is the process of desire."[4] Kyŏng-su is not only a becoming-animal, he is also a becoming-Sŏng-u (Kyŏng-su imitates Sŏng-u by swaying while drunk and sleeping with Sŏng-u's girl); a becoming-child (he sucks on Sŏn-yŏng's breasts), and not least, a becoming-impotent (when heavy drinking finally catches up with him). He is in the process of transforming, but only insofar as the plane of life he is traversing remains fundamentally unchanged. The repetition of the swaying, the little accidents (a young girl's fingers jammed in a car door; glasses tipped over), and the same lines offered to Kyŏng-su by two different women—"Me in you. You in me"—all undermine his transformation. Every moment experienced in the past is reflected through the glass of the present, multiply overlaying the actual subject, who is haunted by the phantom of his memory.

Turning Gate's theme of eternal recurrence is realized through the use of repetition as its central motif. Almost every event, critical dialogue, and situation is repeated in the film, and every repetition constitutes a degree of difference. For instance, the phrase "I love you" is a verbal utterance that crucially underpins the central irony of the film, and is repeated several times.[5] First Myŏng-suk insists that Kyŏng-su say it, and his unwillingness to do so ends up humiliating her. His stubborn insistence that "love" is an awkward word to him is conveniently forgotten when he courts Sŏn-yŏng. He confesses his love to her on their first date, during a sexual encounter that is visually explicit. The word "love" is an inscription, a sign capable of anything but its real meaning. But what is—to borrow a Deleuze-ian term—the "thing-ness of the sign" in *Turning Gate*? For instance, is there an essence of the image of Myŏng-suk in the photo she offers to Kyŏng-su? What about the tattered poster pinned up in the barbecue

restaurant? The countless empty *soju* bottles on the table? The persimmon falling from the tree in Kyŏng-ju? The naked bodies of a man and a woman in a hotel room? And the ubiquitous duck-hunting boats wherever there is patch of water? By refusing to endow such objects with sentimental power, the film causes them to emerge as sites of both melancholia and difference. Difference is not something that is empirically produced between two different objects, but rather that which exists between the same objects or the recurring use of the same objects. To the question of whether there should not be some meaning attached to these recurrent signs, Hong Sangsoo responds that they simply reproduce a praxis of everyday life, a substance that is material to his work of art.

All of these repetitions take place in a kind of double articulation of past and present that has been integral to the temporal rhythms of Hong films. However, if the earlier ones, such as *Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors* (2000), tangled up time by staging the same event twice or showing the possibility of two different paths, *Turning Gate* brings this experimentation to a halt. The film's time remains linear, but it constantly interweaves the past and the future into the present. Repetition also plays a critical role in this interweaving. Equally suspect in *Turning Gate* as it is in *Virgin Stripped Bare* is the truth, when repetition and memory contest the veracity of what really has taken place. When Sŏn-yŏng and Kyŏng-su engage in pillow talk, Kyŏng-su confesses that he saw her husband with another woman. This memory and the questioning of the husband's moral integrity—despite the protest that it draws from Sŏn-yŏng—is only possible because Kyŏng-su has accidentally met Sŏn-yŏng's husband twice before in the film: the first time in Ch'un-ch'ŏn, when his duck-boat bumps into another in which a stranger—accompanied by a woman—asks for a light; and the second time in Kyŏng-ju, when Kyŏng-su is loitering in front of Sŏn-yŏng's house and the same man walks up and is revealed as Sŏn-yŏng's husband (Kyŏng-su hurriedly walks away to avoid confronting the husband, leaving the floating question, "Can you speak English?"). But like the viewers who have forgotten whether the stranger in the boat and Sŏn-yŏng's husband are indeed the same person (Hong Sangsoo deliberately cast a non-professional actor to play the role of the husband), Kyŏng-su's memory is unreliable. "Perhaps I was mistaken," he admits, before cynically adding, "All Koreans look alike." Is it only in the area of physical appearances that Koreans are alike? What about other qualities, such as behavior? Could this statement be reconstrued to imply that the gap between one Korean (the husband) and another (Kyŏng-su) is also indiscernible? These questions— along with "Was it really Sŏn-yŏng's husband out there in the boat?" — are all left unanswered.

Though *Turning Gate* raises the idea of a myth that directly refers to the exterior conditions limiting the fate of its protagonist, this myth serves not to facilitate the transcendent meaning of life, but rather to derive an objective social condition that suffocates any form of idealism and desire. Kyŏng-su's relentless pursuit of Sŏn-yŏng leaves them both in a state of limbo. In order to help Sŏn-yŏng decide between her husband and Kyŏng-su, they visit a *mudang* (a shaman who communicates with the local spirits). This fortuneteller is incisive in her judgment of a situation in which there is no clear answer, and her predictions enable Sŏn-yŏng finally to choose her husband over Kyŏng-su. Kyŏng-su is "truly" in love, to the extent that he declares there is "nothing else that I would want in a woman." But it is unethical for him to love a married woman. The *mudang*'s analysis is simply too cruel for him: she finds Kyŏng-su's future to be cursed with emptiness, wandering, and physical danger, while Sŏn-yŏng's husband can look forward to a life filled with career advancement, wealth, and popular respect.

It is intriguing that the *mudang*'s "verdict" about the present is reached through her clairvoyance into the future after analyzing the past—i.e., the birthdays of Kyŏng-su, Sŏn-yŏng, and Sŏn-yŏng's husband (who of course is not present at the fortune-telling session). Time again jumbles between present, past, and future. Ironically, the supernatural and the premodern must be invoked in order to resolve a conflict between the ideal (love) and the practical (marriage) at a time when no other productive mechanism for arriving at a decision can be found. The power of the supernatural, of clairvoyance, and of the future seals the fate of the ideal love to which Kyŏng-su aspires.

Though Kyŏng-su's ego is bruised and his quest for the meaning of life can never succeed, his failure gives us a glimpse of what Georg Lukács, according to Fredric Jameson, once pointed out as "the most basic image of human freedom"—"the *momentary* reconciliation of matter and spirit toward which a hero strives in vain"[6] [my emphasis]. Kyŏng-su's obsession and stubbornness have, at least temporarily, made him a hero who will strive for the unity of transcendental ideals and a pragmatic life, despite the probability that he will fail miserably. In the process, he will have fallen short of "becoming-human," a project that was cursed

from the beginning and acknowledged as unrealizable. In portraying a man who has been thoroughly humiliated, however, the film succeeds in reverberating with the redemptive message that life still needs to be lived—even when its meaning remains undiscovered. After all, disappointment produces a pivotal moment in any given quest. "It is difficult to be human, but let's try not to become monsters," pleads Kyŏng-su several times throughout the film. This repeated plea, directed as much at himself as at others, is at once a comical touch and a critique. *Turning Gate* thus realizes a theme that is extremely rare in narratives—both filmic and literary—today and almost nonexistent in contemporary films: that of a hero who achieves meaning only in opposition to his context and who is hurt and humiliated when he seeks integration, whether into a society or into true romance. By portraying this awkwardness, Hong Sangsoo draws out a story of human experience in which will and truth, however futile, are worth striving for.

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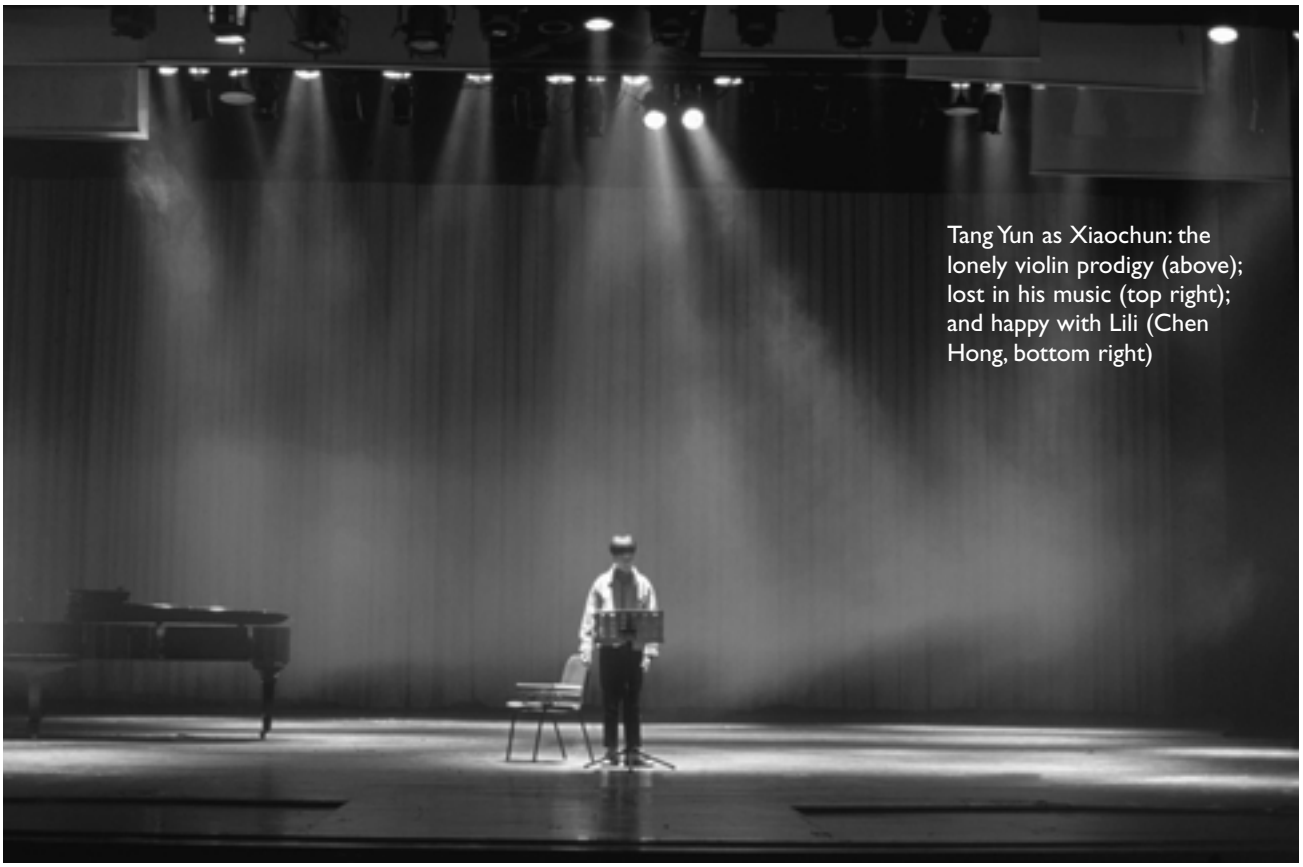
Notes

1. See Akira Lippit's essay, "Hong Sansoo's Lines of Inquiry, Communication, Defense, and Escape," also in this volume.
2. He has since then made *The Power of Kangwon Province* (*Kangwondo ŭi him,* 1998), *Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors* (*O! Sujŏng,* 2000), *Turning Gate* (*Saenghwal ŭi palgyŏn,* 2002), and *Woman Is the Future of Man* (*Yŭja nŭn namja ŭi miraeda,* 2004).
3. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 19.
4. Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 272.
5. See my chapter on Hong Sangsoo's films, "Too Early/Too Late: Temporality and Repetition in Hong Sang-su's Films," in *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004). In it, I argue that the utterance of "I love you" in Hong Sangsoo's films is often a signifier that is devoid of its meaning.
6. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 173.

Abstract This review analyzes *Turning Gate,* the maverick Korean director Hong Sangsoo's fourth film and perhaps the most critically acclaimed title in his distinguished filmography. It discusses how the film—in a humorous yet rigorous fashion—recasts the modernist filmmaking strategies of double articulation, depiction of everyday mundanity, and subtle disruptions of the dominant film language.



Tang Yun as Xiaochun: the lonely violin prodigy (above); lost in his music (top right); and happy with Lili (Chen Hong, bottom right)

Together

Director: Chen Kaige. Producers: Ton Gang, Chen Hong. Writers: Chen, Xue Xiaolu. Cinematographer: Kim Hyungkoo. Editor: Zhou Ying. United Artists.

Eighteen years have passed since Chen Kaige, director of *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), has made a film set in contemporary China. Since *The Big Parade* (1986), Chen, whose 1984 film *Yellow Earth* ushered in the movement of mainland filmmaking known as the Fifth Generation, has dabbled primarily in the kind of period pieces that characterize not only his work but also most Chinese cinema that gets released in America. Thus *Together* provides an opportunity for Chen to take a fresh turn in his filmography and join the new waves of young Chinese filmmakers seeking to rethink the history-obsessed traditions of the Fifth Generation—filmmakers like Nelson Yu (*All Tomorrow's Parties,* 2003), Jia Zhang-ke (*Platform,* 2000), and Wang Bing (*West of the Tracks,* 2003).

The film follows the adventures of a boy whose father has brought him from a small town to the city of Beijing, where the temptations of upward mobility lure the ambitious father into pursuing violin lessons for his prodigy son. However, the 13-year-old Xiaochun discovers what he's been missing all his life—beautiful city women—and begins to wander off by himself, ultimately finding a great gig at the home of Lili, a well-intentioned prostitute who finds moral solace in the nostalgic songs played by a young village boy. Xiaochun's father finds a distinguished violin instructor for him, but neither the boy nor his teacher can concentrate on music, since both are obsessed with the women who haunt them, the former with his dead mother, the latter with a long-lost adolescent crush.

The film is certainly a crowd-pleaser. *Together* swept the audience awards at all the mid-sized international film festivals such as Florida, Tribeca, Filmfest DC, and the San Francisco International Film Festival, where it was the audience award runner-up in 2003. What this suggests is that the film is wooing a new kind

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Xiaochun and his father (Liu Peiqi) move to Beijing.

of festivalgoer: casual movie buffs who like their films a little exotic, but comfortable enough not to shatter any preconceived notions. It also garnered high praise from Roger Ebert, who wrote (in the *Chicago Sun Times,* 6 June 2003), "*Together* is powerful in an old-fashioned, big-studio kind of way; Hollywood once had the knack of making audience-pleasers like this, before it got too clever for its own good"—which is completely correct, but hardly what makes a film great.

What festival audiences and critics like Ebert are reacting to are the similarities between *Together* and the popular American and European films of the 50s and 60s. Chen's film doesn't have the sarcasm or bitter irony that characterize current Hollywood product, and audiences seem to be ready to fall for a film that reminds them of a more innocent age of movie-going. It's the nostalgia trap. With *Together*'s success, American critics are simply lauding filmmakers who make films like Americans used to do. The scenes of Xiaochun, the 13-year-old musician, taking violin lessons exemplify this tendency to imitate. In one shot, the audience sees the instructor in high-key chiaroscuro (most setups either feature noir-like shading or Spielbergesque backlighting) as he lists his rules for learning music, rules such as: "If you want to learn to play, you actually have to play," and "You have to enjoy playing to play well"—old-fashioned clichés for not only the budding musician but the budding athlete and scholar as well. However, when such scenes take place in a country stereotyped as backward, as China is, it's easy to overlook the clichés in favor of the "cuteness" associated with seeing these formulas adopted by others. There can be a tendency among Americans to see other cultures as imperfect or inchoate versions of themselves, an imperialistic trait that has helped determine which foreign films will enter American commercial theaters.

Unfortunately, this cultural superiority can persist because foreign film distributors have traditionally been more reluctant to release films that critique or problematize this view of the Other in favor of films like *Together,* which is intent on praising the virtues of the country bumpkin instead of probing the problems specific to modern Beijing. By constantly reverting to the village—the nostalgia for the recent past, the hick-of-all-hicks father clad in a hideous flannel shirt and a "cute" baseball cap, the simplicity of a little boy and his violin—Chen allows his film to be absorbed by Western countries' popular imaginations of China, which fits nicely into the filmmaking traditions one sees on Turner Classic Movies. In fact, the entire logic of the movie, not unlike *Meet Me in St. Louis,* is mobilized by the idea that the city is dangerous and deceitful, and we've got everything we need in our small town. While this conservative premise can be charming, especially given the pessimism that has troubled many contemporary foreign/indie features, it ends up saying very little about Chinese society, which was

Father and son together

the project of the Fifth Generation filmmakers until the late 90s. For example, the most significant clash between country and city cultures occurs in the beginning of the film, when Xiaochun's father asks his son which flannel shirt would be most acceptable in the city, and the son makes his choice even though we know he probably has no idea either. This is undoubtedly a touching scene, but it is condescending to the characters and worse yet, it is typical of the kind of cultural conflict that has nothing at stake: the consequences of choosing the "wrong" shirt are so insignificant that it might make the audience wonder whether there is in fact any real cultural difference between the rural Chinese and the citizens of Beijing.

Throughout the film, this superficial division between the country and the city is executed with similar simplicity. After explaining why the characters are lured by the big city, the film unfurls an assortment of scenes showing how ignorant but adorable both Xiaochun and his father can be. Besides falling for their terrible fashion sense, the audience is expected to love them because the boy so persistently follows his maiden around (in current American film, this would be called stalking), while the dad proves to be a handy cook (in current American film, this would be called racial stereotyping). Thus the two characters, because of their third-world charm, can satisfy desires in the American audience that are typically only tolerated in old movies and foreign films (the desire, for example, to see women as turning points in a boy's coming of age and Asians as providers of exotic cuisines). *Together*'s characters embody these repressed desires, and the film exploits this to win the audience's undivided sympathy. This recruiting of foreign films to satisfy otherwise unacceptable desires can be seen throughout the film, simultaneously reinforcing the idea that China is an underdeveloped America and justifying the conservative ideals of the past.

Chen often includes music as a central element of his work (*Yellow Earth, Life on a String, Farewell My Concubine*), and although *Together* is the first of his films to use Western music, its values come forth most brightly in its use of music that isn't Western classical. The pivotal and most genuinely moving moments of the film all employ traditional Chinese songs. When Xiaochun first performs for Lili, he plays "Dai Biao Wo De Xin," a beloved Chinese oldie. In one of the film's most emotional scenes, Xiaochun's father understands that if his dreams of financial success are to come true, he'll have to switch teachers for his son. The background music shifts from Debussy to a Chinese folk song when the father confronts and fires the violin instructor. Finally, at the end of the film, as the father learns to let go of his son (who is now sporting an urban haircut and faux-Burberry outerwear), the music played is another old Chinese melody. Thus Chen's attitudes on traditional values are visible even through the choice of music: Western classical music

The violin instructor, Professor Yu (Chen Kaige himself), with his star pupil

(especially when played by Xiaochun and another preteen violin student) is associated with labored beauty and professional struggle; Western pop music (the Celine Dion played at a department store) is associated with commerce and the unhealthy desire for expensive goods; and Chinese music is associated with sacrifice for the family, perhaps the most important element in Confucian culture.

Chen's inability to concoct new thrills and convincingly portray societal changes is in direct contrast with the work of Jia Zhang-ke, commonly considered the trailblazer of contemporary Chinese cinema. Jia's recent *Unknown Pleasures* (2002), another film about young people and music, resists any comparison to stock Hollywood characters, narratives, and ideologies. His characters wander seemingly aimlessly through their small-town environment, yet each choice about and clash with their expectations of how they "should" act in a near-capitalist society has much invested in it—certainly more is at stake here than what shirt one should wear. *Unknown Pleasures,* and even less provocatively experimental films like Zhang Yang's *Quitting* (2001) and Zhang Yibai's *Spring Subway* (2002), are interested in understanding the myths of contemporary society for young people disillusioned by ever-changing economic, political, and cultural policies. In their representation of local issues, these films remain obstinately inaccessible to Americans. *Together* can never really be about China because it can only appeal to Westerners as almost-Western. It exemplifies the distinctly American idea that the world is only in equilibrium when everyone else is trying to be American. *Together,* with its soap-opera-like love tangles and use of high-fives and the word "cool," delights the cultural imperialist; *Unknown Pleasure,* with its long takes, foreign attitudes toward performed music, and unfamiliar social and economic conditions, initially alienates casual viewers, but it also provides them with the opportunity to rethink their methods of analysis, and in doing so, it is able to reveal how people around the world are coping with their specific problems.

It seems that the people who are most uneasy with Chen's film are the ones uncomfortable with the rampant father/son, son/teacher, son/hooker-with-a-heart-of-gold melodrama, especially when they compare the film to the director's renowned *Farewell My Concubine*. These critics, such as Kevin Thomas of the *L.A. Times,* denigrate *Together* for underachieving and for wasting the potential of a world-class filmmaker like Chen. What they don't realize is that the melodrama is the *best* aspect of Chen's films; it is what provides the splendor and passion they had actually been responding to the whole time. The most unforgettable moments of *Farewell My Concubine* are the most overtly emotional ones: the mutilation of the boy's fingers so he can get into opera school, the ubiquitous Gong Li creating the ultimate love triangle, the culminating suicide/stage-acting/profession of love on a de-

serted basketball court. Though *Together* is smaller in scope than *Farewell,* there are probably as many bursts of melodramatic emotion per minute in Chen's new film as in his 1993 epic because less time is spent on exposition and history telling. For example, the most exhilarating moment in *Together,* when the camera cuts to a sensational shot of the father on a hanging construction lift shooting up beside a skyscraper (possibly an homage to the 1937 Shanghai classic *Street Angel*), is reminiscent of Chen's ability to master the panoramic scope of historical epics like *Emperor and the Assassin,* while the Spielbergesque backlighting seems a natural, PG-rated extension of the opium-dazed blur of *Farewell My Concubine* and *Temptress Moon*.

Critical hostility to the small scope and undeserved melodrama tells us two things. First, it's clear that what critics reacted to as so lavish, unforgettable, and shocking about *Farewell My Concubine* was the "Banned in China" label put out by the press and the publicity, which enabled them to safely ignore the theatrical qualities and embrace the hip and digestible political undercurrents. But the label disappears in *Together,* and the result is a film that feels slight, although it says about as much about Chinese society as *Farewell* did. With the transnationalization of Chinese cinema and the globalization of the Hollywood product, Chen's new film appears more familiar and local, thus it doesn't have that edge, that political spear that tickled the fancy of Western critics while piercing the heart of a country they love to distrust.

Second, it's clear that the mediocrity of *Together* reveals the unsophisticated directorial sense that has been so evident in Chen's films since his 1993 Cannes winner. His post-1993 work simply isn't as good as he's given credit for—praise that was garnered because of his political courage, not his directorial flair. To be fair, his works are satisfyingly old-fashioned. In fact, looking at his 1990s output, we see this quality in all its rampant excess, from the lavish costumes, sets, and history-telling of *Farewell My Concubine* to the exotic smoky corridors of the Christopher Doyle-shot *Temptress Moon,* to the wide-angle battle scenes, Shakespearean betrayals, and bloody revenge of *Emperor and the Assassin*. Looking at his films this way, instead of with Thomas's "Banned in China" nearsightedness, makes me far more comfortable about *Together* and certainly about Chen's universally derided, straight-to-video sexploitation clunker, *Killing Me Softly.* That doesn't make any of these films extraordinary by any means, just consistently and unimpressively Chen's. For his truly innovative work, we must return to his mid-80s films, such as *King of the Children* and *Yellow Earth*, to which *Together* has undeservedly been compared simply because it too is about kids and music.

It's unfortunate then that in returning to films about contemporary Beijing, Chen's conservative bad habits drag the film down with clichés: the dim-witted father who proudly hides his life savings in his cap (never a good idea); the country boy who comes of age in the cruel big city (symbolized by his duplicitous second violin teacher, played by Chen himself); and the cheesy contrast between good teacher (shot in rustic orange) and bad teacher (shot in metallic gray). Chen's strength may be visual excess, but as the past ten years have shown, he's been uninterested in exciting us with it.

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Abstract Chen Kaige's *Together* represents the tendency of American art houses and film festivals to celebrate foreign films that cling to outdated ideals of filmmaking and global exchange instead of works that push the boundaries of art and social critique. This review examines *Together* in light of that phenomenon and then places the film in the trajectory of Chen's oeuvre.

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Part I

Black City Cinema

African American Urban Experiences in Film

By Paula J. Massood. Pennsylvania, PA: Temple University Press, 2003. $69.50 cloth; $19.95 paper.

In her book *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film,* Paula J. Massood aims to go beyond aesthetics or issues of racial representation to consider how the history of the look, sound, and content of black film has been in dialogue with the changing socioeconomic context of the black city. She argues convincingly that black films respond to their immediate sociohistorical moments in ways that make them "political actions in which the city becomes the symbol of—sometimes the synecdoche for—African American political life" (8). To prove this, Massood relies mostly on textual analysis, and points to policies and populations shifts for context. Discussion of theory is in a small section in the introduction, in which Massood brings in Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope," a person, place, or figure that embodies or is embodied by time. Massood acknowledges that Bakhtin was writing about literature, but argues that the additional representational layers of cinema make for even richer texts to apply his notion of the chronotope: for example, in black musicals of the 1930s, jazz signified urbanity while spirituals connoted the rural. Massood later argues that by the late 30s, the black city itself became a chronotope in film, signifying black modernity and its attendant perils and possibilities.

So important is the city in Massood's analysis that she marks eras in black film history by sociopolitical shifts such as the Great Migration and the real and discursive constructions of "the ghetto" in the 1960s. Massood provides interesting insights about the centrality of mobility and migration to the black experience, but it would have strengthened her case if she had indicated whether and how this makes the history of African Americans unique. For example, there are many "white city" films; can we attribute them to the same causes? Massood divides the book into chapters on all-black musicals from 1929-1943, race films from the late 1930s, blaxploitation and related films in the 1970s, "hood" films in the 1990s, and post-hood black films.

Massood argues that pastoral films from 1929 to 1943 often ignored the increasingly urban spaces that blacks were occupying during the Great Migration. Instead, they portrayed blacks as existing in a "seemingly static rural space," the antebellum idyll, which was marked by the "iconography of a rural, preindustrial southern agricultural economy" (14). This was epitomized by the film *Green Pastures,* with its heaven that looked a lot like a cotton plantation. Massood analyses how *Hallelujah, Green Pastures,* and *Cabin in the Sky* idealize the rural while condemning the urban through representations of urban music, vices, slang, and fashion. Massood's best analysis of the gender politics of black city cinema is in her examination of how in both *Hallelujah* and *Cabin in the Sky* a black male protagonist is torn between two women who represent the evils and pleasures of the city or the comforts and virtues of rural domesticity.

Massood argues that the all-black musicals discussed in the first chapter "fail[ed] to recognize the sociopolitical landscape by producing folk musicals that placed their black characters in a pastoral idyll, resembling a southern antebellum plantation" (3). In the second chapter, she analyzes race films of the 30s, which acknowledged the Great Migration and represented the city in different ways. Silent race films served to warn newly arrived black migrants of potential

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urban evils, while sound race films, which Massood focuses on, "addressed for the first time [on film], the presence and the promise of the city" (3). This chapter emphasizes the latter part of this time period, when industrial and social factors led black films to focus less on racial uplift and more on competition with Hollywood. The black "genre films" such as the gangster movie *Dark Manhattan* developed a "Harlem chronotope, a contemporary, although often symbolic city space connoting African American modernity" (46).

In chapter three, Massood writes that in the 1960s and 1970s, as cities became more important to the film industry, they were themselves also becoming more "black"; the combination of continued black migration to cities and white flight to the suburbs was creating cities with near-black majorities. She analyzes the role of the "ghetto" in a mixture of independent and mainstream 70s films: *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, *Superfly*, and *Bush Mama*. Massood states that the city becomes a character in these texts. Chase scenes provided the rationale for moving through the streets, offering a tour of the city. Authenticity, through such devices as including familiar landmarks such as the Apollo Theater and references to contemporary politics, was central to ghetto films as they sought not just to represent the poverty and crime of the city, but also to rearticulate the meanings of "blackness" and "the ghetto" that were circulating in social policy at the time.

The second half of the book focuses on the 1990s. Unfortunately, in the shift from the 70s to the 90s, Massood marginalizes several rap films from the 80s (*Breakin', Krush Groove*) which seem to be significant in establishing the centrality of rap music to the aesthetics of the contemporary black city film. As may be expected, director Spike Lee figures heavily in Massood's analysis of black city cinema in the 90s. Chapter four focuses on how Lee's films, in particular *She's Gotta Have It* and *Do the Right Thing*, complicated blaxploitation representations of the black city. Among other things, Lee shifted the focus from Harlem to Brooklyn, and brought into the frame a multiplicity of middle-class black subjects and the racial, economic, ethnic, and generational diversity of the black city. Chapter five discusses the wave of black filmmaking in the early 1990s that followed the realization that these (relatively) cheaply made films could be very profitable for major Hollywood studios. Taking a close look at *Boyz N the Hood* and *Menace II Society,* Massood discusses the changes in the city that were reflected in the hood film. Crack cocaine, gang violence, and poverty created poor neighborhoods held hostage by young drug dealers. In these films, the characters are contained by "visible and invisible boundaries marking smaller, sometimes violently heterogeneous areas" (167). Massood does a fine job of showing how, contrary to the discourses of Los Angeles' beauty and open spaces, black characters in hood films set in L.A. were constantly struggling against being "herded in" to their hoods by the police, ethnic differences, and violent rivalries. Chapter six is an analysis of Spike Lee's film *Clockers* and the ways in which it represented Lee's desire to depart from the dead-end tropes of the hood film and showed his introduction of trains into the text in order to signify physical and mental mobility and transformation.

Thanks to Massood's lively writing style, *Black City Cinema* is a good read. It is also an important contribution to the field of film studies. Massood blends textual analysis with social context to move beyond just aesthetics or debates over "positive" or "negative" representations; with its focus on race, the book is a welcome intervention in the recent surge in examinations of space and culture, including the roles of the city in film. Massood's overall argument about the city is convincing, but more theorizing about the marginal role of Southern and/or rural spaces in contemporary black film seems called for. The reasons for the prevalence of the city in black cinema may seem obvious, but I believe they are worth investigating, as they are also tied up with the prominence of cities, New York in particular, in the American imagination. Massood does not completely abandon the South in her analysis of post-Migration films; she examines the vestiges of the South in *Cotton Comes to Harlem* and devotes much of the epilogue on post-hood films of the 1990s to *Down in the Delta*. However, I would argue that the South/the rural is key in other texts as well; for example, an analysis of *Jason's Lyric* (set in Houston) could have been a worthy addition to Massood's discussion of hood films. As a black Southerner who grew up on *Fat Albert, Good Times,* break-dancing films, and hip-hop, I can't help but wonder: What has it meant to the millions of blacks who live outside of cities that "the black experience" increasingly became constructed as "urban" in popular culture as well as politics?

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In the first chapter of *Crime Films,* which is the third installment in Cambridge University Press's "Genres in American Cinema" series, author Thomas Leitch, Professor of English and Director of Film Studies at the University of Delaware, spends much of his time debating whether he even has a genre to explore. Historically, he argues, crime film has been an academically ignored category; its subgenres—including film noir, detective stories, and gangster films—garner the attention. So should the larger category be its own genre, or simply an umbrella covering better-known genres? And does it matter what we call it? And what makes a genre a genre? In this way Leitch exercises himself academically for pages even though we know—as surely as we know that the detective will solve the crime, because that's the way of detective films—that ultimately Leitch will argue in favor of the crime film genre, because we're holding the book in our hands.

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Yet in a way he doesn't. His explanation arrives unexpectedly through the back door. He's not *introducing* a new category called crime films at all; he's simply explaining how "such a category has already been operating to inform viewers' understanding and enjoyment of such apparently diverse genres as the gangster film, the film noir, and the crime comedy" (4).

And what might such a category entail? Here, unfortunately, Leitch engages in that awful academic game of building up weak objections only to knock them down again. For Leitch, there are three "insuperable obstacles" (13) in defining the crime film genre: the fact that, although crime is an aberration, crime films tend to treat crime as normal; the difficulty in distinguishing crime films from thrillers (where crime is an isolated event instead of a metaphor for social unrest); and the intermingling of its stock characters, which include the criminal, the victim, and the avenger. Reading this, an astute reader might think, "Why are these obstacles? They seem like definitions to me." That is, a crime film is one in which crime is treated as normal, and a metaphor for social unrest, and where its stock characters tend to blur their boundaries. It's at this point that Leitch, like a bad magician, reveals, with a hearty abracadabra, that his obstacles aren't obstacles at all but are "in fact at the heart of such a definition" (13).

Leitch's definition of crime films also takes into account our ambivalence about crime and the law. What helps define the genre, he says, are "a pair of contradictory narrative projects: to valorize the distinctions among these three roles [the criminal, victim, and avenger] in order to affirm the social, moral or institutional order threatened by crime, and to explore the relations among the three roles in order to mount a critique that challenges that order" (16). Our souls are constantly veering between the wish for a kind of totalitarian order (and safety from the lawless) and a kind of anarchic freedom (and safety from the law), and crime films are celluloid representations of this ambivalence, which, in different eras, have come down at different points on this spectrum. In the 1930s, as Leitch points out in the second chapter, "Historical and Cultural Overview," the Depression, and the fact that "police officers appeared increasingly as enforcers of rich men's law" (24), helped popularize the gangster as tragic hero, self-made entrepreneur, and, with the advent of sound, "a member of a specific marginal ethnic group" (24). Warner Bros. may have included wordy pronouncements on the need for law and order before and after their features, but their gangsters—Cagney, Muni, Robinson—were dynamic, and the alternatives in films like *Scarface* and *Public Enemy* were either tight-assed, moralizing cops or tight-assed, moralizing newspaper publishers, which is to say no alternatives at all. It's an irony that goes back at least to *Paradise Lost,* in which Milton's God was dull and forgettable next to his dynamic Satan. Warner Bros. criminals also tended to be avengers (against the institutional order) and victims (of the institutional order, or of their own megalomania), but ultimately they became victims of the Hays Office, which grew teeth in the mid-30s, and outlawed the outlaws, although, sneaky bastards, they kept returning in more palatable forms (Cagney's Rocky Sullivan in *Angels with Dirty Faces*; Bogart's Roy Earle in *High Sierra*).

It's a tricky business, generalizing about decades (history isn't as neat as Little Bill shooting his orgy-loving wife as the orgy-loving 70s ended in *Boogie Nights*), but there's still value in pointing out, as Leitch does, how the lawyer as hero (Atticus Finch) reflected comforting thoughts about 50s institutions; how the gangster as hero (*Bonnie and Clyde*) reflected anger about 60s institutions; and how the rogue cop as hero (*Dirty Harry*) reflected doubts about both 60s rebellions and 70s institutions. Overall, though, the brunt of this book about the little-known crime film genre actually focuses on its better-known subgenres. Chapters four through twelve highlight, in order, the victim film, the gangster film, the film noir, the erotic thriller, the unofficial-detective film, the private eye film, the police film, the lawyer film, and the crime comedy—with an explication of a representative film at the end of each chapter. However, a more historical approach, balanced by Leitch's themes, would have been appreciated here.

Individual crime films through the years didn't have to be charted according to whether they affirmed or challenged the moral, social, or institutional order (although it might have made an interesting exercise), but Leitch should at least have kept such a chart in mind as he wrote. Instead he meanders, pointing out whatever's interesting along the way. Some of his meanderings are appreciated—his distinction, for example, between the European victim film like *The Bicycle Thief,* in which there is a crime and a victim but not a criminal or avenger, and the Hollywood victim film, like *Straw Dogs* or *Death Wish,* in which victims tend to be "worms who turn on their tormentors" (82). But overall, his prose style is too academic to hold our interest for long. It's like taking a nature walk with a botanist who speaks only Latin. Plus his close readings of films sometimes come across as myopically close. Example: "Lesbianism, *Bound* suggests, is not deviant; heterosexuality is, because its couples are divided by the very forces that unite them, from criminal conspiracies to sexual difference" (169).

As for his representative films, we're never really sure *why* they're representative. At times Leitch chooses purity over ambiguity (*Bullitt* instead of *The French Connection* for police films), at times he chooses ambiguity over purity (*Fury* instead of *Death Wish* for the victim film; *Chinatown* over *The Maltese Falcon* for the private eye film). *The Godfather* is selected as the representative gangster film because it's "the most ambitious of all such studies, and the greatest of all American crime films" (116), but greatness and ambition aren't always among Leitch's criteria. In fact, its greatness may make *The Godfather* the *least* representative gangster film, since nothing else compares. It puffs itself beyond its genre.

But the value in handling the messy crime film genre via its tidier subgenres reveals itself during the chapter on the lawyer film (represented by *Reversal of Fortune*). As I read the sentence, "The lawyer's official role, held in contempt in

gangster films and police films alike, is to represent the law to individual citizens accused of wrongdoing . . ." (245), I thought: Of course! Who we focus on tends to be who we sympathize with. Thus studying the gangster film without the corresponding lawyer film or police film is like watching a third of *Rashomon*: we're only getting part of the overall story. Leitch says as much in the final chapter, "Conclusion: What Good Are Crime Films?" The full story, he writes, "continues to haunt the partial story each subgenre represents, for every film in every crime subgenre is marked by numberless traces of the alternative crime story it could have been." He adds, "*The Godfather,* for all its tragic pretensions, could have been a comedy" (292). We can go further. With a shift in focus, *The Godfather* could have been a police film about the rise and fall of a corrupt cop (Capt. McCluskey); or it could have been a different type of gangster film about the attempted rise of a young, ambitious gangster (Sollozzo), who saw the future in drugs and had it stolen away from him by the pompously moralistic Don Corleone and his greedy sons. As Tom Stoppard did with *Hamlet,* you could *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* almost any crime film. Where's the film on Dirty Harry's beleaguered chiefs—trapped between this maverick cop and the prigs at city hall? Where's the film on the prigs at city hall who must deal with this rampaging cop and his ineffectual police chief? It raises the question whether any character is so despicable that we won't sympathize with them if we know their whole story and only bits of everyone else's. Certainly Henry, from *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. Others?

As Leitch, in the final chapter, expands his crime film genre ever outward by mentioning, in passing, other subgenres he hadn't focused on (prison films; man-on-the-run stories; films about superheroes), he still boils down the crime film category into a "single constitutive theme: the romance of criminal behavior" (306). He writes, "Even as the crime film focuses on a victim or detective or avenger . . . those heroes become interesting, admirable, and heroic precisely to the extent that they begin to act like criminals" (306). So essentially we're back to the romance of Milton's Satan. Yet Leitch doesn't recall aforementioned exceptions to his single constitutive theme—Atticus Finch immediately comes to mind—and why they *are* exceptions. This could have proven invaluable.

But overall Leitch makes his case, and provides a structure through which any crime film—and, really, any film with a criminal, victim, and avenger—can be studied. Such a structure is never more valuable than now. Will our current films affirm or critique the social, institutional, and moral order? In a post-Enron world (our institutions are corrupt and must be weakened), and a post-9/11 world (the world is corrupt and our institutions must be strengthened), how will our ambivalence exhibit itself on film?

Erik Lundegaard reviews movies and books for *The Seattle Times*.

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Dreaming of Fred and Ginger

Cinema and Cultural Memory

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Annette Kuhn's new book begins with an enigmatic title: "Dreaming of Fred and Ginger." The title begs a subject, a completion: Who is dreaming? What kind of dreaming is going on here? And why Fred and Ginger?

In the following pages, Kuhn attends to these questions, writing a provocative and ambitious social history, or ethnohistory, of 1930s British cinema culture. In this emerging field of social history, researchers conduct ethnographic interviews, jarring the memories of informants, attempting to map and construct a history-of-memory, or memory-of-history, of a historically specific social and cultural phenomenon. Emphasizing the relationship between place and the lived experiences of specific historical communities, ethnohistories have greatly contributed to our understanding of the ways in which certain places become part of a group's shared cultural memory. From turn-of-the-century Jewish immigrants' memories of a bustling Lower East Side to childhood memories of a magical local British theater, such studies archive memory. They render palpable the ways in which a place comes to be imagined and reinhabited in memory.

Through copious informant interviews of a core 78 informants, analysis of contemporary records and primary source materials, and readings of selected 1930s films, Kuhn unravels the incredible social and cultural significance of the cinema for a generation of young Depression-era British cinemagoers, those "making do" through economic hardship and during a key moment in film history—the rise of classic Hollywood cinema. Kuhn reminds us that cinema attendance in Britain was the highest per capita in the world during the 1930s. As such, the cinema became a crucial component of the 1930s British social imaginary, forming an integral part of the everyday lives of a generation of cinemagoers. Those especially affected were the era's children, whose desires and dreams found expression on the screens, extending beyond to the space of the theater and to home: "For this generation, going to the pictures was the occasion for the very earliest ventures into the world beyond home. Close to home, almost an extension of home, and yet not home, 'the pictures' is remembered as both daring and safe." Kuhn attempts to excavate cultural memories of the cinema and, with those memories, a formative moment in both her informants' lives and film history. As Kuhn argues,

> Given the decline in the fortunes of cinemagoing and the disappearance of so many cinemas since the 1950s, this excavation becomes an act of witness as much as an exercise in mental archaeology. And yet at the same time it betokens losses of several kinds—of childhood, innocence, youth, community. "Stopping off" at cinemas on the memory

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> map also allows the speaker to relive pleasures once experienced as familiar and very ordinary aspects of daily life, but which are now lost (20).

Dreaming of Fred and Ginger then describes and theorizes new objects and methods for film studies, melding the spatial and historical dynamics of film consumption (from informants' memory-maps of their childhood neighborhoods to the alternately "entertaining" uses of a theater's back row) with audience-spectator analysis. In terms of the latter, Kuhn complicates ahistorical and generalized notions of the screen-spectator dynamic of psychoanalytic discourse concerned primarily with scopophilia, or the pleasure in looking. As she argues, "It is apparent from the memories of cinema-goers of these years that the pleasure of looking at the cinema screen is but a small part of an all-encompassing somatic, sensuous and affective involvement in the cinema experience" (147). From sneaking into a theater (an expression of ingenuity and a challenge to period privations) to staying warm and dry, and occasionally frightened, while watching a rainy Saturday afternoon's continuous program featuring *The Mummy* (1932), these informants' descriptions of the cinema reminds us that the cinematic experience was a series of juxtaposed experiences and sensations. It is the work of Kuhn's book then to render a more "nuanced and integrated understanding of how cinema works historically, culturally and experientially" by focusing on "the point where historical, ethnographic and textual stories meet," where fantasy meets the everyday (7).

Composed of nine chapters in addition to an epilogue and appendix, these stories are interconnected, making for a webbed, complicated reading that moves in a variety of directions simultaneously. Indeed, Kuhn acknowledges in the epilogue the "great deal of ground" covered in the book, and devotes a few pages to unpacking the book's contributions to studies in "spectatorship in cinema," "canonicity," "elders' stories," "theories of memory," and "childhood," to name a few. Moreover, *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger* enters into just about every film studies discourse imaginable: studies in exhibition, reception, spectatorship, cinematic fetishism, star analysis, the phenomenology of fandom and genre studies in a chapter on the social politics of 1930s horror film (under screen "frights"), as well as, in a brilliant chapter, the integrated musicals of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

The book may be roughly broken down into two sections: the first outlines its ethnohistorical method, the second presents the results of this method. Chapters one and two contextualize, theorize, and rhetorically map Kuhn's methodology of "memory work and cinema memory" in order to understand how "films and their consumers interact" (3). Such work allows her to focus on the characteristic tropes of memory, binding her informants' memories together in a kind of collective cinema memory, the organizing logic of subsequent chapters. She subsequently argues for the fusing of three methodologies: text-based, formal analysis of films; context-driven research of films and their audiences (primarily through reviews); and the sociological method of querying contemporary audiences. Since film studies scholarship has often ignored "the historical social audience," Kuhn seeks to address this gap in her study, which becomes a model for future studies (7).

In the following chapters, Kuhn uses key recurring elements/motifs from informants' "memory talk" as the organizing locus for each chapter, moving from early childhood to late adolescence. For instance, one chapter organizes itself around the motif of the jam jar. Informants repeatedly mention early memories of trading jam jars for movie tickets, recalling an early cinema barter economy. Another chapter focuses on adolescent styles modeled on those of Hollywood stars. One woman remembers buying inferior stockings at a "jumble sale" for "ninepence a pair," in an attempt to have legs that looked a bit like Ginger Rogers' (131). Kuhn reads these kinds of improvisations, or moments of "making do," as "a kind of seizure of power in small, everyday acts" (123), a reminder that "aspiration perhaps outstripped opportunity" (133) for a generation of 1930s British men and women. These chapters contain some of the most engaging moments of cinema "thick description," such as informants' sense-memories of the palpable, hard wooden planks of early cinema benches or the smell of the disinfectants sprayed over crowds of children in rural theaters.

We finally find the eponymous "Fred and Ginger" in chapter seven's discussion of romance, fantasy, and the mutable landscape of the 1930s musical. It is here that Kuhn reads the 1930s movie palace, featuring the barely contained sexuality of Fred and Ginger, as a site of courtship and romance, a "heterotopia": "'a space capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several possible incompatible sites as well as times, a site whose system of opening and closing both isolates it and makes it penetrable, as it forms a type of elsewhere/nowhere'" (184). Through informant interviews and a fascinating analysis of the "Cheek to Cheek" musical number in *Top Hat* (1935), Kuhn extends the reach of the integrated musical, miming the spatial rhetoric of the musicals themselves, as she describes how one realistic, if fictive, filmic space (in the story) opens up onto another wholly different space, a fictive, fantasy space (the musical number). This fluid landscape extends even further when informants discuss how they courted in the theater's back row and danced after viewing the film. In another spatial elision, then, the fantasy of the musical meets the bricks and mortar of the theater and dance hall (141). Thus, remembering Fred and Ginger is remembering "that the cinema at its most pleasurable can combine the kinetics of the moving image with the kinesis of the moving body in an all-encompassing, embodied cinema memory" (193).

In *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger,* Annette Kuhn moves the cinema back home again, to the realm of personal history. With her poetic prose, which balances the socio-anthropological, Kuhn reminds us that the cinemas in our past may be located in the memories of those around us. *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger* has a sense of urgency to it, for her informants' memories, charted over a period of ten years, might have very well been lost. Kuhn's work is a reminder of the ephemerality of memory, often entombed, made silent, by the passing of time. Her work especially

resonates for those of us who have already lost access to those memories. Living in a New Jersey tenement during the 1930s, my Italian-born grandmother, a dishwasher at the Waldorf-Astoria, who could barely speak a complete sentence of English, even toward the end of her life at age 92, went to a local movie theater every day. What she saw, how she understood, with her rural Italian dialect, and whom she courted in the back row will remain a mystery. That she named her first son, born in 1930, "Rudolph," after Rudolph Valentino, is the stuff of family lore. Exactly why and how she came to name her son, my uncle "Rudy," is lost forever. These kinds of histories, our histories, are worth writing. They, like all stories, start out "from the places of memory, the places of childhood: the paths that lead back into a past that is remembered as a landscape across which cinemas are dotted like beacons in the night, and where all journeys begin and end at home" (12).

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Enfant Terrible!

Jerry Lewis in American Film

Edited by Murray Pomerance. New York: New York University Press, 2002. $55.00 cloth; $18.00 paper.

Based on the 16 well-written and critically considered essays in this anthology, Jerry Lewis's star is rising. Gone are the days when American cinephiles could smugly ponder the conundrum: Why do the French like Jerry Lewis? In light of Murray Pomerance's strong critical anthology, American critics can no longer patly deflate and dismiss Lewis's comedy. Of course, Lewis's reputation has been undergoing reevaluation and has been improving for some time, prompted by the Shawn Levy biography, *King of Comedy,* Lewis's own published efforts, and the work of critics such as Frank Krutnik, Scott Bukatman, Dana Polan, and others. (One of the valuable critical assets of this anthology is the bibliography, with its references for these and many other works on Lewis.) Yet this anthology brings together many voices and critically examines a broad range of Lewis's creative efforts over a long period of time extending from the late 1940s to the early 1990s. In chorus, they make a strong case for Lewis's remarkable contribution to American film.

In his introduction to the anthology, Pomerance addresses what he calls the popular "denigration" (2) of Lewis as comic actor and director, concentrating on three general areas responsible for this negative reaction: Lewis's acting style; an imputed identity between performer and screen character; and the lack of appeal of Lewis's early work to audiences today. These three concerns introduce the three major themes that underlie the anthology's essays. Pomerance divides the book up into four sections. After an initial section composed of essays by Leslie Fiedler and Shawn Levy reflecting on Lewis, Pomerance has each of the next three sections look at a particular major theme. The first theme, taken up by the essays in the second section, concerns Lewis's performance style as "masquerade" (9). Labeling Lewis's traditional acting style as "intemperate," Pomerance describes it as "strident, brash, dysfunctional, uncoordinated, immature, inarticulate, imposing, hyperactive . . . rude, untutored, uncivilized, inconsiderate, and often ugly . . . all this, and to an extreme degree" (3). Nevertheless, what the essays in this section show is the variety in Lewis's performances. Andrew Horton discusses Lewis's character in Emir Kusturica's "Balkan absurdist comedy" (44), *Arizona Dream* (1993), showing how different his role as "holy fool" is from the young "intemperate" roles he played earlier. Krin Gabbard analyzes Lewis role in his television remake of *The Jazz Singer* (1959), pointing out the complexity of the performance. Craig Fisher analyzes Lewis's "mercurial" role (80) in the last Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis film, *Hollywood or Bust* (1956). By comparing Lewis's character with the Dustin Hoffman character in the generically similar *Rain Man* (1988), Fischer brings out the complexity of the performance, noting its homoerotic aspects and the way that Lewis challenges traditional notions of the star persona.

In the third section, Pomerance groups together essays that focus on social relations and the ideological frameworks that support these processes. Mikita Brottman reads Lewis's character in *The Stooge* (1953) as an instance of "imbecile chic" (125) and examines it as a commentary on and comic index of repressed attitudes in the 1950s toward mental illness. Lucy Fischer, in her essay, also examines attitudes toward mental illness in the light of the "sick jokes" and Lewis's performance in *The Disorderly Orderly* (1964). Part of the problem with accepting this social focus to Lewis's films has to do with what Pomerance calls "backstaging," a tendency to read Lewis's behavior on the screen as emanating from Lewis the actor: "Who, indeed, but a man completely out of control could so believably portray a man completely out of control?" (5). Nevertheless, other essays show the broad range of social concerns in Lewis's films beyond the portrayal of an "out of control" character in a repressed society. David Desser examines Lewis's "orientalizing" of Jewish male identity in *The Geisha Boy* (1958), discussing the film as a commentary on American beliefs about masculinity in the 1950s. Frank Krutnik looks at Lewis's relationship on screen with Dean Martin as a complex reflection on heterosexuality at the beginning of the Cold War. J.P. Telotte finds in Lewis's performance in Martin Scorsese's *King of Comedy* (1983) a cinematic realization of Paul Virilio's concept of derealization—the breakdown between mediated images and reality in contemporary society.

The essays in the last section of the book all argue that particular Lewis films (*The Nutty Professor* [1963], *The Ladies Man* [1961], *The Delicate Delinquent* [1957], and *The Errand Boy* [1961]) are thematically developed works worthy of sustained critical interest. And strong cases are made for so considering those films, supporting Pomerance's

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belief in Lewis's stature. For Lewis, according to Pomerance, deserves recognition because he

> artfully contrives onscreen to reflect to us the militant, judgmental, sadistic, even cupidinous face of our most tyrannical selves, our drive for domination and control; because his work is quintessentially cinematic; because the work contains much interesting social critique; and because, as these essays show, Lewis in fresh ways gives us so much to consider about the human condition (7).

Throughout the anthology several critics find in Lewis's films a rich source of insight into contemporary beliefs about masculinity. Desser discusses this; Bukatman does as well. Nowhere is this critical interest more sustained than in Susan Hunt and Peter Lehman's essay on *The Nutty Professor*. Noting an "odd lack of narrative resolution" to the Jekyll-Hyde premise of the film, they bring out the complexity of the treatment of masculinity in the film and further develop the discussion of masculinity initiated in earlier essays. In fact, one of the great virtues of this anthology is that as one reads through the essays one is constantly coming upon parallels, connections, and further examples of points made by critics in earlier essays. Although the essays are concerned with a wide range of topics, the authors' points often contribute to and extend the analysis in other essays.

Finally, another virtue of this anthology is that it brings together a group of original essays, some of which have been contributed by critics who have written about Lewis before. This revisiting by critics, not all of whom have been effusive in their praise for Lewis in the past, contributes to the sense of the reevaluation of Lewis and gives a greater depth to the critical conversation about his films.

Kevin W. Sweeney teaches philosophy and film studies at The University of Tampa and is writing a book on Buster Keaton.

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Film Music

Critical Strategies

Edited by K.J. Donnelly. Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press, 2001. $79.95 cloth; $29.95 paper.

Although writing on film music dates back to the earliest years of cinema, it is still daunting to consider how much work remains to be done. In this collection of essays edited by K. J. Donnelly a variety of approaches are represented, and each represents appropriate lines of inquiry. This is because the study of film music has always held a marginal role in the study of film, which has considered film sound in general to be relatively unimportant in relation to image and narrative. Its marginal status extends into the study of music, in which scholars of "art music" have too often denigrated film's fragmentary and utilitarian employment of composers' work, judged as a lesser form than compositions made for the concert hall (a no less utilitarian endeavor).

Perhaps the general blind spot (deaf spot?) in film music studies stems from subject divisions within the academy, caused not only from inattention, but also neglect. The question hasn't only been how to study film music, but *where* to study it. Six of the ten contributors to the anthology work in music departments, while the other four teach in film and media studies departments. At its best, Donnelly's collection encourages further critical interdisciplinary work.

In the introduction, Donnelly surveys the two traditional approaches to film music studies: semiotics and musicology. He manages to cite their respective strengths and weaknesses without reducing either to caricatures. Donnelly writes: "While film scholarship has largely ignored film music as a problem it would rather not face, music scholarship has persisted in the prejudice that film music is somehow below the standard of an absolute music" (1). Donnelly is careful to point out that the two areas of inquiry aren't contradictory; rather, the stakes are fundamentally different. Musicology can analyze film music when detached from the filmic context. Film studies' attention to film's social contexts has too often excluded the soundtrack.

The most systemic critical interventions into these difficulties appear in the first few essays, written by David Neumeyer and Jim Buhler. In "Analytical and Interpretive Essays (I): Analysing the Music," the authors examine musicological methodologies for their applicability to film music studies. Neumeyer and Buhler are able to explain not only the central concepts under which musicology functions, but also the historical logics under which the field has operated. Jim Buhler's "Analytical and Interpretive Approaches to Film Music (II): Analysing Interactions of Music and Film," a companion to the preceding piece, considers music as a component part of the overall sonic composition of the film. He cites two pivotal theorists of sound in film: French theorist Michel Chion, whose work was popularized in the U.S. through the publication of *Audio-Vision* (Columbia University Press, 1994), and Rick Altman, the American theorist whose work is most responsible for discussions of film sound on this side of the Atlantic, through books such as *Sound Theory/Sound Practice* (Routledge, 1992). Buhler negotiates his position between Chion, who emphasizes sound in relation to the larger sound design, and Altman, who argues that the various elements of film sound constitute an equally integral part of the filmic experience: "Following Michel Chion, I argue for interpreting music as an element within the overall sound design, but with Rick Altman and against Chion I argue that the three elements of the soundtrack (dialogue, music and effects) do indeed constitute an integral, parallel track to the images" (39).

The rest of the book is arranged by topic in chronological order. The essays in this collection cover disparate subjects, though many of the topics are specialized enough to discourage those looking for a more general overview. Michael Allen's "How Electrical Reproducers Facilitated the Transition of Sound" is a helpful intervention in film sound's technological history, largely due to its examination of time lapses in the adoption of "talkie" technology in Britain. While the U.S. film industry adopted the new technology

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The remaining essays cover a diverse array of topics. Caryl Flinn's piece on Werner Schroeter's *The Bomber Pilot* (1970) helps to more carefully define the relationship between music and kitsch in the New German Cinema. Robynn Stilwell's study suggests subjectivity and gender identity can be shaped by a "musical" approach to film sound, as exemplified in *Closet Land* (1990). Ken Garner's analysis of how pop music functions in the films of Quentin Tarantino furthers the work dedicated to composite film scores constructed out of popular music, as does K.J. Donnelly's analysis of the allegorical functions composite scores can serve, as in Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg's *Performance* (1970). For some readers, William Rosar's essay may seem the most distant from contemporary film studies, not only because he eschews "theory" in favor of what he sees as a more objective film history, but also because his article requires some knowledge of classical music. Rosar focuses on whether "authorial intention" can be assigned in film music, as he makes the case for the influence of Rachmaninoff's *Dies Irae* on Bernard Herrmann's compositions for *Citizen Kane* (1941). Even biographical sketches of forgotten figures from the history of film music remain highly relevant in an area of study that has yet to fully map out its own historical figures and trajectories. Alfred Cochran's essay on the film scores of Gail Kubik (perhaps best known for his work on William Wyler's *The Desperate Hours* [1955] and Alfred Green's *Two Gals and a Guy* [1951], an early filmic parody of television) underlines our lack of knowledge beyond a few commonly known film music auteurs (Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, and above all, Bernard Herrmann).

Like most anthologies on film music, Donnelly's anthology sacrifices depth for breadth, in order to capture a broad perspective in a growing research area. Although we may soon be reaching the point in which film music scholars may not feel as though they have to reinvent the wheel with each new book on the subject, *Film Music: Critical Strategies* stands as an example of just how many avenues remain to be investigated.

Kyle S. Barnett is a Ph.D. candidate studying the recording industry's mode of production from 1920 to 1935 at the University of Texas at Austin's Department of Radio-Television-Film.

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The Flash of Capital

Film and Geopolitics in Japan

By Eric Cazdyn. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002. $64.95 cloth; $21.95 paper.

Cinema and capitalism share a number of traits in Japan: both have an official history of around 100 years, although in both cases the significant prehistory—a variety of screen practices, and the merchant ethos of the flourishing market economy in the Tokugawa era (1603-1868)—cannot be ignored; both are considered to have been imported from the West and implanted onto the native soil. Eric Cazdyn's provocative book, *The Flash of Capital: Film and Geopolitics in Japan,* starts by drawing these parallel lines, and calls into question the very conceptual ground on which this parallel might seem to rest—the linear progression of history and the national and cultural identity of Japan—by exploring unexpected connections between film and capitalism.

The Flash of Capital is a valuable contribution to the field of film studies by a scholar well versed in historical and theoretical discussions in the field of Japanese studies in North America. Cazdyn highlights the heart of the polemics of Japanese studies in the last four decades, namely, how to conceive of modernization, and at the same time endeavors to give articulation to the age of globalization which both the advocates of Gross National Product and their critics have failed to grasp. Cazdyn's project, however, does not take a chronological narrative as its structure. Rather, he poses three problems in the history of capitalism in Japan: colonialism, in which Japan was at once the colonizer and the colonized; contradictions between the collective and the individual with which postwar democracy was particularly concerned; and globalization, in which capital, labor, information, and cultural artifacts overflow and thereby undermine national boundaries. Six chapters illuminate the links between film and these problems from perspectives such as "adaptation" (chapter three) or "pornography" (chapter five). This nonchronological structure has two virtues. Firstly, it simply makes the book as a whole enjoyable to read, providing the reader with glimpses of various facets of Japanese cinema and history. Secondly, this organizational strategy serves as a meta-criticism of the theological narrative of progress, clearly contrasting itself to evolutionary views of history presented by previous written or filmed Japanese film histories, which Cazdyn critically investigates in chapter two, "Historiography." Another strong point of *The Flash of Capital* is that it extensively discusses documentary filmmakers such as Fumio Kamei, Susumu Hani, Shinsuke Ogawa, Kazuo Hara, and Sumiko Haneda, who have rarely received the critical attention they deserve in English-language scholarship. I believe that Cazdyn's empathic writing on their aesthetics and politics will interest those readers unfamiliar with these names more effectively than "objective" and flat introductory descriptions.

Cazdyn's methodology in linking film to capitalism is interesting and at the same time problematic. First of all, it

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The remaining essays cover a diverse array of topics. Caryl Flinn's piece on Werner Schroeter's *The Bomber Pilot* (1970) helps to more carefully define the relationship between music and kitsch in the New German Cinema. Robynn Stilwell's study suggests subjectivity and gender identity can be shaped by a "musical" approach to film sound, as exemplified in *Closet Land* (1990). Ken Garner's analysis of how pop music functions in the films of Quentin Tarantino furthers the work dedicated to composite film scores constructed out of popular music, as does K.J. Donnelly's analysis of the allegorical functions composite scores can serve, as in Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg's *Performance* (1970). For some readers, William Rosar's essay may seem the most distant from contemporary film studies, not only because he eschews "theory" in favor of what he sees as a more objective film history, but also because his article requires some knowledge of classical music. Rosar focuses on whether "authorial intention" can be assigned in film music, as he makes the case for the influence of Rachmaninoff's *Dies Irae* on Bernard Herrmann's compositions for *Citizen Kane* (1941). Even biographical sketches of forgotten figures from the history of film music remain highly relevant in an area of study that has yet to fully map out its own historical figures and trajectories. Alfred Cochran's essay on the film scores of Gail Kubik (perhaps best known for his work on William Wyler's *The Desperate Hours* [1955] and Alfred Green's *Two Gals and a Guy* [1951], an early filmic parody of television) underlines our lack of knowledge beyond a few commonly known film music auteurs (Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, and above all, Bernard Herrmann).

Like most anthologies on film music, Donnelly's anthology sacrifices depth for breadth, in order to capture a broad perspective in a growing research area. Although we may soon be reaching the point in which film music scholars may not feel as though they have to reinvent the wheel with each new book on the subject, *Film Music: Critical Strategies* stands as an example of just how many avenues remain to be investigated.

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The Flash of Capital

Film and Geopolitics in Japan

By Eric Cazdyn. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002. $64.95 cloth; $21.95 paper.

Cinema and capitalism share a number of traits in Japan: both have an official history of around 100 years, although in both cases the significant prehistory—a variety of screen practices, and the merchant ethos of the flourishing market economy in the Tokugawa era (1603-1868)—cannot be ignored; both are considered to have been imported from the West and implanted onto the native soil. Eric Cazdyn's provocative book, *The Flash of Capital: Film and Geopolitics in Japan,* starts by drawing these parallel lines, and calls into question the very conceptual ground on which this parallel might seem to rest—the linear progression of history and the national and cultural identity of Japan—by exploring unexpected connections between film and capitalism.

The Flash of Capital is a valuable contribution to the field of film studies by a scholar well versed in historical and theoretical discussions in the field of Japanese studies in North America. Cazdyn highlights the heart of the polemics of Japanese studies in the last four decades, namely, how to conceive of modernization, and at the same time endeavors to give articulation to the age of globalization which both the advocates of Gross National Product and their critics have failed to grasp. Cazdyn's project, however, does not take a chronological narrative as its structure. Rather, he poses three problems in the history of capitalism in Japan: colonialism, in which Japan was at once the colonizer and the colonized; contradictions between the collective and the individual with which postwar democracy was particularly concerned; and globalization, in which capital, labor, information, and cultural artifacts overflow and thereby undermine national boundaries. Six chapters illuminate the links between film and these problems from perspectives such as "adaptation" (chapter three) or "pornography" (chapter five). This nonchronological structure has two virtues. Firstly, it simply makes the book as a whole enjoyable to read, providing the reader with glimpses of various facets of Japanese cinema and history. Secondly, this organizational strategy serves as a meta-criticism of the theological narrative of progress, clearly contrasting itself to evolutionary views of history presented by previous written or filmed Japanese film histories, which Cazdyn critically investigates in chapter two, "Historiography." Another strong point of *The Flash of Capital* is that it extensively discusses documentary filmmakers such as Fumio Kamei, Susumu Hani, Shinsuke Ogawa, Kazuo Hara, and Sumiko Haneda, who have rarely received the critical attention they deserve in English-language scholarship. I believe that Cazdyn's empathic writing on their aesthetics and politics will interest those readers unfamiliar with these names more effectively than "objective" and flat introductory descriptions.

Cazdyn's methodology in linking film to capitalism is interesting and at the same time problematic. First of all, it

must be pointed out and appreciated that his political analysis of films is not satisfied with mere plot summary. Readers expecting a predictable ideological reading of the plot and characterization of a propagandistic film set in a Japanese colony, or a postwar democracy film in which the protagonist engages in debates on subjectivity, will be pleasantly surprised. Cazdyn attempts to figure out relations between aesthetics and politics, trying to do justice to their complexities. His notion of form exceeds what usually falls into the category of formal aspects in film studies, such as editing, composition, camerawork, acting style, or the use of sound. Cazdyn explicates:

> I will focus on form—or, more specifically, on the formal relations between cinematic categories (such as acting, film adaptation, film historiography, canon formation, aesthetic representation, and pornography) and capitalist categories (such as accumulation methods, social agency, nationalist discourse, money, political representation, and crisis). I zoom in on those critical moments of Japanese modern history during which the forms of both cinematic and capitalist categories mutate (5).

Here Cazdyn calls "form" a concept, just as "money" can be viewed as a universal equivalent and reification of labor which functions to categorize discourse and practice at concrete points in time and space.

This freestanding interpretive framework enables Cazdyn to broaden the scope of his arguments. The concept of pornography in chapter five offers, to my mind, the most successful case. The term pornography works to his advantage, as in both academic and everyday usages it encompasses critical and political assessments and the operating genre norms. Cazdyn defines pornography as a negative concept, that is, a concept the social function of which is to legitimize what is not. On these grounds, he argues that such self-reflexive films as Shohei Imamura's *The Pornographers* (1966) and Kazuo Hara's *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (1987), not to mention Nagisa Oshima's *In the Realm of Senses* (1976), are pornographic because they obliquely highlight the totality of Japanese society that other forms of discourse cannot effectively articulate. His theorization of the totality in postwar Japan as a dynamic system that closely connects parts with one another and thereby precludes traditional political representation and oppositional movements is sophisticated and nuanced. Cazdyn discusses "reality culture" as pornography, and vividly foregrounds both dystopian and utopian potentialities of the transnational genre of TV shows, video, film, and websites that not only record real-time events but also produce them through an involvement of the object of the camera and the spectator.

It seems to me that Cazdyn's close textual analyses are most problematic. In his analysis of *The Pornographers,* he argues that Imamura's masterful use of the frame-within-frame composition that capitalizes on obstacles such as sliding doors and CinemaScope indicates the director's critique of the pornographic composition that privileges the centrality of the human body and commodity and thereby obscures sociohistorical power relations (185-85). This reading of formal aspects of *The Pornographers* operates on Cazdyn's historical recognition that the boundary between pornography and non-pornography would become blurred in the decades to come. Given that the frame-within-frame composition of wide screen is almost ubiquitous in 1960s Japanese cinema, however, his analysis raises the question of how he grounds his hermeneutics on the history of individual and group film styles.

Chapter six, "Rereading," reexamines six canonical texts of Japanese cinema, from Teinosuke Kinugasa's experimental classic *Page of Madness* (1926) to Mamoru Oshii's animated *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), and spells out Cazdyn's methodology of textual analysis most succinctly. He clarifies that he is undertaking allegorical readings of these texts, regarding their formal aspects as symptoms of colonialism, the question of subjectivity, and globalization (208-9). For Cazdyn, reading the film text is a political practice. While he shows a keen awareness of film's formal details in this chapter, some of his interpretations leave numerous gaps to fill, at least for me, between the text and the context.

The inclusion of more mediating factors between the film texts and politics would further enrich Cazdyn's reading. It is not that they would give his analysis proof or authenticity, which he himself would never claim, but simply that they would provide his reading with more complexity and sophistication. First, a film-historical inquiry into aesthetics and technology would have made his arguments more convincing. To take a specific example, Cazdyn argues that by 1926, when Kinugasa made *Page of Madness,* Japanese cinema had already envisioned sound cinema, minimizing the intervention of the *benshi* (the film lecturer who provided every silent film screening with an oral performance) into the film's signification, and was heading toward adopting the Hollywood paradigm for this purpose (213). This delineation, however, confuses causal and contingent relations between the introduction of the Hollywood paradigm, the coming of sound, and the role of the *benshi*. The Hollywood paradigm had already taken root in Japanese filmmaking in the early 1920s, long before the standardization of sound; Japanese film culture had not faced the threat to convert to sound until 1929, when Hollywood talkies finally started flooding Japanese screens. As the relations among prewar Japanese cinema, Hollywood, and the *benshi* occupied a central place in establishing Japanese cinema as a privileged object of study in film studies, this is not a trivial point. Second, Cazdyn's central thesis would be strengthened had he paid more attention to the film industry in linking film and capitalism. I would like to emphasize this point despite his own statement that his interest does not hinge "on the profits and losses incurred by the film industry in Japan" (2), because when he does so on one occasion, it produces brilliant results. Cazdyn lays out the film studio Shochiku's demise as a vertically integrated film conglomerate, locating in this history Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring* (1947, Shochiku) and the Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Good Men, Good Women* (1995), a film co-produced by Shochiku that includes a quote from *Late Spring* (222-27).

However, these problems should not prevent us from perceptively receiving the intellectual stimuli *The Flash of Capital* offers. Cazdyn's idiosyncratic jump-cuts between the film texts and geopolitics invite us to think through difficult questions about history and the act of reading; his lively observations of contemporary Japanese media culture may suggest one of the possible ways in which film scholars can engage in politics as public intellectuals in the age of globalization.

Chika Kinoshita is a graduate student at the University of Chicago.

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A History of the French New Wave Cinema

By Richard Neupert. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. $55.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.

In *A History of the French New Wave Cinema,* Richard Neupert takes a refreshing new look at one of the most widely heralded, influential, and vibrant movements in cinema history. With a clear, concise, and engaging writing style, Neupert traces the New Wave from its prehistory and emergence through its zenith in the early 1960s to its dispersal in the middle of that decade, and finally to its continuing historical significance and influence on film culture. The author's extensive research includes hundreds of sources in both French and English: books; articles from magazines, newspapers, and trade publications; interviews, both previously published and original; scholarly/critical essays; and careful analyses of dozens of films, many of them available only in European archives.

As the New Wave is, if anything, intensely auteur-centric, one might expect any history of it to be carried out primarily along aesthetic lines. Neupert, however, balances his aesthetic inquiry by situating the movement within the larger economic, social, and cultural contexts of post-World War II France. Neupert characterizes his methodology as "historical-poetical," an approach often identified with the Wisconsin school of film history and analysis (Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell, and others).

Unlike some other scholars who have studied this movement, Neupert faces head-on the troublesome question of just what the "New Wave" *is*. Rather than simply referring to a group of directors and a loosely delineated artistic school—with its attendant formal and narrative experimentation—Neupert claims that the term French New Wave is (and always has been) a marketing tool. Significantly, it also comprises sociological, economic, and technological changes. Neupert also argues persuasively that creative personnel other than directors should be considered part of the nouvelle vague, including: screenwriters;[1] cinematographers such as Henri Decaë and Raoul Coutard; production designers such as Bernard Evein; producers such as Pierre Braunberger and Georges de Beauregard; distributors such as Ignace Morgenstern; and actors such as Jeanne Moreau, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Bernadette Lafont, and Jean-Claude Brialy.

Of course, a crucial part of what defines the New Wave is its ties to *Cahiers du Cinéma,* as several of the movement's key directors began their careers as critics for that influential journal. A cynic might go so far as to suggest that the New Wave was largely a critically constructed and self-publicized endeavor, a concerted effort by Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rivette, Rohmer, et al., to promote their own films. Neupert's approach suggests that perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on these particular directors at the expense of other important, contemporaneous figures. Indeed, several competing French film journals of the late 1950s were championing dozens of promising young "directors to watch," and in the first few years of the New Wave, over 100 "first films" were made in France. A *Cahiers*-centric approach not only overlooks most of these films and reduces the movement to a handful of great men, it also marginalizes key players like the so-called Left Bank group, consisting of Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais, Jacques Demy, and others, who have been separated from the New Wave proper apparently for little reason other than that they never wrote for *Cahiers*. Furthermore, histories that privilege the *Cahiers* directors seem to accept wholesale a rather truncated version of the emergence of the New Wave, which has it that a group of brash young cinephiles-turned-critics-turned-directors rebelled against a moribund French cinema, revitalizing it with their own new approach to film style. All this may well be true, but it is far from the whole story, as Neupert ably demonstrates.

Neupert's most important contributions are exemplified in his first chapter, which situates the New Wave within the economic, social, cultural, and political climates of postwar France and Europe. In the late 1940s and the 1950s, there was an understandable cultural need in France to reassert the Republic's cultural, political, and economic clout vis-à-vis Europe and the rest of the Western world. Additionally, the postwar generation of young people aged 15-35 saw themselves as fundamentally distinct from their parents' generation, and the term "nouvelle vague" was initially applied to this emerging, invigorated youth culture. Furthermore, the establishment of Charles de Gaulle's Fifth Republic in 1958 instigated a period of national renewal during which the very concept of newness was seen as inherently vital to French culture. Throughout Europe there were all sorts of "new" movements in the arts, from the "new novel" to "new theater," and cultural critics began to speculate on when, where, and how the seemingly inevitable "new cinema" would crop up. France's Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) offered substantial monetary support for French filmmakers, and in the mid- to late-1950s the CNC devoted considerable funds to fostering fresh cinematic talents. These financial incentives went a long way toward enabling Truffaut, Godard, and others to make their first short films and features. So, as Neupert elegantly demonstrates, the New Wave did not simply spring forth from the collective genius of a few rebellious young critics; rather, it

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emerged from a complex system of interrelated historical phenomena.

While *Cahiers*-centric accounts of the New Wave tend to marginalize Alexandre Astruc, Agnès Varda, and Jean-Pierre Melville, Neupert reevaluates their importance to the birth of the movement. Furthermore, by devoting one of his seven chapters to these three seminal figures, the author implicitly demarginalizes them, suggesting that no history of the New Wave would be complete without careful consideration of their work. In a subsequent chapter, Neupert also takes a close look at the early feature films of Roger Vadim and Louis Malle, films that contributed to the success of the New Wave chiefly by demonstrating that low-budget, creatively financed efforts by first-time directors could become commercial hits. Also, one cannot overlook the sexual frankness of these films—such as *And God Created Woman* (1957) and *The Lovers* (1958) —a characteristic that would become a hallmark of the New Wave.

Even though Neupert suggests that the New Wave did not begin and end with the *Cahiers* directors, he does not ignore the central roles played by, in particular, Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Godard. One might be tempted to think that there is nothing new to write about these giants of film history, but Neupert does offer a novel take on their early features—the films that clearly fall within the "New Wave proper." In addition to providing thoughtful narrative and stylistic analyses of such landmarks as *Le Beau Serge* (1958), *The 400 Blows* (1959), and *Breathless* (1960), the author chronicles the processes of development and funding for these films. Moreover, he considers the impact of box-office performance and critical reception on the filmmakers' subsequent efforts. If, as Neupert suggests, the first few features by these three auteurs resemble one another enough to constitute the core of an artistic movement, then certainly, by the mid-1960s, the directors' approaches had diverged to such an extent that it no longer made sense to group them under the umbrella term New Wave.

By positioning the chapters on Chabrol, Truffaut, and Godard literally at the center of his book, Neupert explicitly acknowledges their centrality to the New Wave. However, these three artists should be seen more as archetypes of the New Wave than simply as the best or most important of its filmmakers. Neupert devotes his last chapter to the other *Cahiers* critics-turned-filmmakers (including Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette), arguing that they made important contributions, even though their films of the period were not as numerous or as popular as those of the "big three."

A History of the French New Wave Cinema positions itself not as a definitive work, but rather as a fresh starting point for reexamining what previously may have been considered a closed chapter in film history. In titling his book "*A* History . . . " rather than "*The* History . . . ," Neupert implicitly leaves room for ongoing reexamination of the French New Wave. Such future reassessments must explore more fully the work of previously marginalized figures: Varda, Demy, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and many others. Let us hope that more than a few of us will take up that task.

Note

1. Often the directors themselves wrote or adapted their screenplays. Still, it is worth emphasizing their dual role, since later auteur criticism tends to forget about the screenwriting process altogether.

Co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Stanley Kubrick,* **Rodney Hill** has taught at the University of Paris, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Kansas, where he is completing his dissertation on the films of Jacques Demy.

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Horse Opera

The Strange History of the 1930s Singing Cowboy

By Peter Stanfield. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002. $37.50 cloth; $16.95 paper.

The accepted history of the Depression-era Western is usually one of decline. When the prestigious historical Westerns *The Big Trail* (1930) and *Cimarron* (1931) became epic box-office disasters for Fox and RKO, the major Hollywood studios withdrew from Western film production, leaving the genre to the serial mercies of Poverty Row. After a tentative return to production in the 1936-37 season, the majors reinstated the Western in 1939 at the heart of a triumphant national cinema. As America moved toward war, Hollywood producers responded to patriotic necessity, redeploying a traditional symbolic language of heroism to unite the country. In his last book, *Hollywood, Westerns and the 1930s: The Lost Trail* (University of Exeter Press, 2001), Peter Stanfield challenged the scholarly consensus claiming that the 1930s witnessed the disappearance of the Western. *Horse Opera* continues his argument, recovering the complex and dynamic history of one of these formerly "lost" figures in American film culture: the singing cowboy.

Horse Opera, as Stanfield admits, emerged from his prior work, where he contextualized the Depression-era Western in both its prestigious "A" feature and serial identities. Insisting on a more flexible and historically specific understanding of the Hollywood "genre," Stanfield's industrial/production history revealed the studios' complex and evolving negotiation with Western filmmaking and audience expectations. While allowing hitherto neglected films such as *Ramona* (1936) and *The Cowboy and the Lady* (1938) a place within his more inclusive and dynamic understanding of the genre, Stanfield seemed bored with the major studios' attempts at prestige Westerns and preferred to locate Hollywood's more complex and even transgressive social narratives within the formerly denigrated serial "singing" Westerns of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. In *Horse Opera,* Stanfield avoids both the transgeneric prestige Westerns and middle-class audiences and returns to the source of the popular 1930s Western and its rural filmgoers.

Although the popularity of the horse opera lasted well into the 1950s, Stanfield focuses on the Depression era because of the unique resonance this low cultural form had

emerged from a complex system of interrelated historical phenomena.

While *Cahiers*-centric accounts of the New Wave tend to marginalize Alexandre Astruc, Agnès Varda, and Jean-Pierre Melville, Neupert reevaluates their importance to the birth of the movement. Furthermore, by devoting one of his seven chapters to these three seminal figures, the author implicitly demarginalizes them, suggesting that no history of the New Wave would be complete without careful consideration of their work. In a subsequent chapter, Neupert also takes a close look at the early feature films of Roger Vadim and Louis Malle, films that contributed to the success of the New Wave chiefly by demonstrating that low-budget, creatively financed efforts by first-time directors could become commercial hits. Also, one cannot overlook the sexual frankness of these films—such as *And God Created Woman* (1957) and *The Lovers* (1958) —a characteristic that would become a hallmark of the New Wave.

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Although the popularity of the horse opera lasted well into the 1950s, Stanfield focuses on the Depression era because of the unique resonance this low cultural form had

with its working-class audience. According to Stanfield, the singing cowboy is one of the most crucial figures generated by the Great Depression precisely because these films told tales of familial loss, economic hard times, and the bitter conflicts between capital and labor, struggles with which audiences identified. The antecedents of the 1930s singing cowboy phenomenon are powerful sites of working-class culture —conflict, dispossession, and hybridity. Stanfield devotes individual chapters to the heritage of the dime novel and magazine fiction, the development of early silent "modern" Westerns, the growing radio popularity of rural cowboy singers, and the performance of blackface minstrelsy in music and film. The result, the 1930s singing cowboy, did not conform to the archetype established by Owen Wister's Virginian, a middle-class hero inhabiting a mythical frontier demi-paradise. These low-budget Westerns weren't funereal laments to the frontier set in some distant past. And they certainly weren't the pretentious historical epics favored by Cecil B. DeMille, but plain confrontations with contemporary life. During the Depression, horse opera connected with a rural audience the way Hollywood polish could not. Stanfield witheringly describes Wister, DeMille, and even W.S. Hart's legacy, perennially preoccupied with representing the frontier, as part of "an embourgeoisement of the Western" (40). Certainly the major studios' epic Westerns of the later 1930s represented the pinnacle of middle-class historical prestige directed at mainstream urban audiences.

Stanfield sets out to prove that the 1930s horse opera was a complex and powerful working-class force, worthy of a lengthy cultural pedigree and a detailed examination of its narrative patterns and public reception. He works against an entrenched popular and scholarly view of the films as an infantilized degeneration of the Western genre. But beneath Stanfield's engaging cultural history is an ill-concealed resentment not only of the tendency within film criticism to dismiss or ignore horse opera, but also of the more canonical films of that era. Admittedly, film scholarship's avoidance of horse opera has also egregiously neglected the major component of American film audiences during the Depression: the rural working class that preferred Gene Autry's musical confrontations with the modern West to Jeanette MacDonald's high-toned glamour or Katharine Hepburn's urbane patter. However, some of Stanfield's claims for the films' critiques of capitalism are a bit exaggerated. He contends that "The critically disparaged and apparently simplistic genre of the series western [sic] has, in its own way, more to say about the social disruptions of capitalism in crisis than such better-known films of the era as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (Columbia, 1936) or *The Grapes of Wrath* (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1940)" (136). While Stanfield does an admirable job of contesting the view of the cowboy as a historically immutable character, taking aim at the solemn Virginian, dour W.S. Hart, and bourgeois historical epics of the 1930s, he fails to analyze the serial Western/horse operas' own aspirations to middle-class prestige. Stanfield notes that Roy Rogers' films often placed him in a historical West (in contrast to Gene Autry) and merely assumes this meant the studio saw him as "an actor" unlike Autry. And Autry, the epitome of the singing cowboy, was responsible for making cowboy songs respectable and nationally marketable to a mainstream film and radio audience.

Gene Autry, one of the biggest box-office draws of the era, is at the heart of Stanfield's conception of the singing cowboy. Autry would remember his screen self as "a kind of New Deal Cowboy," and Stanfield does an excellent job of outlining his role as a mediator between the worlds of cinema and radio, the new and old, the "powerful and the powerless." Stanfield forges the connection between Autry's film persona and the working-class audience, quoting *Motion Picture Herald*'s collected rural responses to some of his Republic films to great effect. I had hoped, however, that in emphasizing this crucial connection between the working-class Western cowboy and his audience, Stanfield would have done more thorough research on audience reception. His hard evidence and argument, particularly in chapter four, remain unchanged from *The Lost Trail*. In fact, for long stretches I thought and later verified that I was reading the same book.

Although Stanfield's chapters on the cultural antecedents of the serial Western/horse opera are interesting, he is less successful at writing film history. Plot analyses are simply not enough to constitute a recuperation of a neglected film genre. How were these films scripted? Were they collaborations with Autry and the writer? Who chose the settings, whether historical or modern? Which scenes were originally planned, and which were later cut? If some of the film narratives really were potentially subversive critiques of modern businessmen, did the PCA ever suggest or demand changes in the scripts? If the rural audience was so key, where are the rural film reviews? If Stanfield really believes horse opera of the 1930s merits consideration and status within film criticism of the Western, he needs to return to the source of film history: production records. Without this, the films simply become the sites of more and more artfully constructed sociohistorical currents and countercurrents.

J.E. Smyth is a Ph.D. candidate in Film Studies and American Studies at Yale University. Her work has appeared in *Rethinking History* and *Film and History*.

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Memoirs from the Beijing Film Academy

The Genesis of China's Fifth Generation

By Ni Zhen. Trans. Chris Berry. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002. $18.95.

Sometimes poignant, sometimes sentimental, but ultimately triumphant, this colorfully written and elegantly translated book tells the stories of how the now famous Fifth Generation filmmakers began their respective journeys at the Beijing Film Academy (BFA). It bears witness to a crucial time of changes, transitions, and opportunities in recent Chinese

with its working-class audience. According to Stanfield, the singing cowboy is one of the most crucial figures generated by the Great Depression precisely because these films told tales of familial loss, economic hard times, and the bitter conflicts between capital and labor, struggles with which audiences identified. The antecedents of the 1930s singing cowboy phenomenon are powerful sites of working-class culture —conflict, dispossession, and hybridity. Stanfield devotes individual chapters to the heritage of the dime novel and magazine fiction, the development of early silent "modern" Westerns, the growing radio popularity of rural cowboy singers, and the performance of blackface minstrelsy in music and film. The result, the 1930s singing cowboy, did not conform to the archetype established by Owen Wister's Virginian, a middle-class hero inhabiting a mythical frontier demi-paradise. These low-budget Westerns weren't funereal laments to the frontier set in some distant past. And they certainly weren't the pretentious historical epics favored by Cecil B. DeMille, but plain confrontations with contemporary life. During the Depression, horse opera connected with a rural audience the way Hollywood polish could not. Stanfield witheringly describes Wister, DeMille, and even W.S. Hart's legacy, perennially preoccupied with representing the frontier, as part of "an embourgeoisement of the Western" (40). Certainly the major studios' epic Westerns of the later 1930s represented the pinnacle of middle-class historical prestige directed at mainstream urban audiences.

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history. It also eloquently frames this groundbreaking film movement in its political, cultural, and aesthetic contexts. Like the subject of his book (i.e., the Fifth Generation cinema), Ni Zhen's writing is highly charged, engaging, personal, moving, and compelling.

The original Chinese title of the book, *Beijing Dianying Xueyuan Gushi: Diwudai Dianying Qianshi,* describes more accurately the method and direction Ni Zhen takes in approaching his subject. Literally translated as *The Beijing Film Academy Story: The Pre-History of the Fifth Generation Cinema,* the Chinese title reflects the much more dramatic and anecdotal content Zi presents than the translated title of "memoirs" would indicate. Ni tells sentimental and nostalgic tales of the Fifth Generation filmmakers and their experiences at the BFA, and draws the readers to some of the most intimate moments of these filmmakers. We are allowed into their inner worlds of struggles, frustrations, emotions, and conflicts. With a few exceptions of direct quotations, however, most of these anecdotes are second-person accounts presented from a first-person viewpoint. With the use of brighter, larger, and more creative font, the original Chinese edition's cover design highlights the word *Gushi* (Story). The same word is also part of the design of the content pages. So on every page the word Story/*Gushi* stands out. Readers of the Chinese edition are constantly reminded that they are reading tales told from a specific perspective with a specific purpose or agenda, hardly a first-person narrative. Chris Berry's choice of translating the title as "memoirs" is, therefore, misleading and problematic. Berry himself, in fact, has very succinctly and insightfully described Ni's writing of the first chapter of the book as if it were "an episode about a band of Robin Hood-style heroes from *The Water Margin* or a similar Chinese martial arts classic" (Translator's Introduction, ix).

That the book was originally written in 1994 for a Japanese publisher and was first published in Nagoya, Japan, in 1995 is particularly significant. It explains, in part, the final product of what Chris Berry has described as a "highly patriotic narrative" (ix) and one that presents much background on the political and cultural contexts of the Fifth Generation cinema. It also explains the disproportional emphasis Ni places on Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, and Tian Zhuangzhuang, the three Fifth Generation filmmakers best known outside of China. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the book would have been more appropriately presented if it were entitled *Portraits of Zhang, Chen, and Tian.* Even the sections in which Zhang, Chen, and Tian are not featured are used as background materials to explain Tian's and Chen's early success at BFA, and Chen's and especially Zhang's ultimate rise to international fame. Furthermore, by focusing only on the directing and the cinematography departments, Ni eliminates most of the other areas of film as a collective art. In the preface to the Chinese edition (2002), Ni stresses that it was his aim to write this book exclusively for a Japanese readership, and he thus had no intention of publishing a Chinese edition. It was only at his friends' urging that he decided to publish a Chinese edition in 2002 to coincide with, and to celebrate, the twentieth anniversary of the BFA class of 1978's graduation.

As Berry has pointed out in his introduction, the English edition of the book is intended to serve as a "critical intervention" in the debates and common criticisms surrounding the Fifth Generation cinema. To that end the book is successful. While not directly addressing these issues in the main text of the book, Ni convincingly demonstrates through the portraits of the filmmakers how the shared experiences of coming of age during the turbulent Cultural Revolution (1966–76) affected both their personal lives and the aesthetic, content, and market decisions they would eventually make in their films. In the postscript that he writes specifically for the English edition, Ni elaborates directly on questions of national cinema, the Oriental spectacle, and the postmodern politics of spatiality and hidden history. In other words, he addresses one of the major postcolonial criticisms of the Fifth Generation cinema: that it caters to a Western imagination of the Orient and the exotic. He examines the Fifth Generation cinema's international reception by breaking it down into two distinctive phases.

Ni views 1983 to 1989 as the classic period that witnessed the beginning of an "art movement," with films such as *Yellow Earth* (1984) and *Red Sorghum* (1986) that shared a common concern for "political rebelliousness, cultural marginality, and artistic innovation" (192). He further argues against a general conception and criticism that those films such as *Ju Dou* (1990) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) that were made between 1990-94 were a result of the commercialization of the Fifth Generation filmmakers and their films. Ni maintains that those films, while comparatively more popular and better received than many other Chinese films in the West, remain marginalized in being placed in a "Third World cultural position in relation to Eurocentrism" (198). Furthermore, most of these films still presented highly critical and political content that "got close to contemporary political history and expressed the fate of ordinary Chinese people in real circumstances" (198). As such, they need to be viewed as products of a period of "development and transformation" (196-97), not just commercialization.

Structured around major developments of the filmmakers' BFA experience, this book is divided into four chapters: "Admission," "Noses to the Grindstone," "First Steps," and "Graduation." The breakdown of the book and the titles of the chapters, however, are deceptively simple. What lies beneath this guise of an academic journey is Ni's harsh criticism of the political and class system that not only caused tremendous suffering to the entire nation during the Cultural Revolution but also created the sort of politics of admission (chapter one) and postgraduate job assignment (chapter four) at BFA that he so vividly, and poignantly, documents in the book. In addition to describing the exceptional talents of Tian Zhuangzhuang and Chen Kaige, for example, Ni also goes to great lengths in detailing their privileged cultural backgrounds and how such privileges ensured a smooth journey for them at BFA (chapter three). This is shown partly through the unacknowledged special treatment they

received while at BFA, including major directing and other assignments, and after graduation, when they gained desirable job assignments at prestigious studios in Beijing. Conversely, because of his adverse political and class background (his father and uncles were members of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist army), Zhang Yimou's many toils and tribulations stand in stark contrast to Tian's and Chen's good fortune.

Upon graduation, Zhang was assigned to the remote—both geographically and cultural-politically—and newly established Guangxi studio, one of the least desirable destinations for BFA graduates. Although it was there that Zhang and three other BFA graduates eventually made *One and Eight* (1984), the feature that Ni credits as the first Fifth Generation film, the assignment was clearly read as a punishment for their wrong class and political backgrounds and a death sentence for their future careers. Thus, if chapter three showcases the stars of the Fifth Generation class at BFA, chapter four tells the sweet revenge story of the underdog who few hoped would amount to anything. In Ni's metaphor-rich language, the "turbulent branch current took over from what had been a calm main stream, becoming more and more rich and full until it soon became a surging river" (145).

The book, though hardly the last word on the topic, is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the temporal and spatial particularities of the genesis of the Fifth Generation cinema.

Shujen Wang teaches media studies in the Department of Visual & Media Arts at Emerson College and is the author of *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (2003).

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Multiple Modernities

Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia

Edited by Jenny Kwok Wah Lau. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003. $79.50 cloth; $24.95 paper.

Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia, which appears to allude to Fredric Jameson's *A Singular Modernity,* aims to answer a pending question: Are the dichotomies between East/West, tradition/modernity, and modern/postmodern valid? The answer suggested in this anthology is no. As the title of the book implies, it is argued that modernity should not be conceived as a constant, single entity that has traveled from the West to the East, but rather as multifaceted entities that are transformed and modified to suit the specific needs and culture of a country.

The book consists of twelve essays, divided into three parts: Part One, "States of Modernities," consists of seven essays, the focus of which ranges from Chinese Sixth Generation Cinema, Japanese literature and cinema, South Korean cinema, to Hong Kong's avant-garde arts. Part Two includes three rather eclectic essays under the heading "Postmodernism and its Discontents"; Part Three consists of two essays that deal with representations of women in the Hong Kong New Wave cinema and a Taiwanese TV show. The significance of this anthology lies in the fact that, unlike many books that deal with a similar question, these essays are both informative and diverse in terms of their focus. This anthology enables us to see how East Asian countries or regions follow distinctive paths in their respective processes of modernization and how a similar set of problems resurfaces nonetheless, as a result of the modernization processes.

In my view, the anthology could have benefited from a slightly different organization. The essays could have been grouped according to a similar set of questions that they aim to problematize. In my view, there are three overarching questions under which the essays could be better put together: (i) cultural flows between East and West; (ii) the questionable trajectory from modernism to postmodernism; and (iii) representations of race and gender in the media. To start with, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto (chapter three), Jenny Kwok Wah Lau (chapter one), Jeroen de Kloet (chapter two), and David Desser (chapter ten), in their respective essays, all question the opposition between East and West, and their associated values.

Yoshimoto examines a Japanese writer, Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, whose career clearly reflects the Japanese—or any East Asian—intellectual's complex attitudes toward what "West" stands for. Tanizaki was infatuated with Western culture in the beginning of his career, but after the Kanto earthquake his enthusiasm for Western culture turned into disillusionment, and he embraced instead the traditional Japanese culture and values. In his essay, Yoshimoto undermines some of the criticisms directed toward Tanizaki—i.e., that Tanizaki's understanding of Western culture was naïve and shallow. Yoshimoto also refuses to trace out Tanizaki's career teleologically—that is, Tanizaki's fascination with Western culture was a mere passing phase; he later came to appreciate the authentic traditions of Japan. Yoshimoto argues that applying a dogmatic schema of East-West to understand Tanizaki's work tends to obscure its subtlety. Yoshimoto takes an example from Tanizaki's *Some Prefer Nettles* to show that what he is interested in is the coexistence of both Eastern and Western cultures in Japan and the commonality between the two. Kaname, the protagonist in *Some Prefer Nettles,* appreciates cinema and armature puppet theater not because his tastes change and he learns to appreciate the traditional art as he ages, but rather because he finds a common characteristic between the two art forms—i.e., their "communality." That is, both cinema and armature puppet theaters provide the audience with an access to what had once been available only to a limited number of people. Yoshimoto's analysis of Tanizaki's works is insightful in that it brings to the fore rather unfruitful oppositions between East and West and between modernity and tradition that are often found in debates about cultural exchange among different parts of the world. However, Yoshimoto might have drawn our attention to the fact that *Some Prefer Nettles*

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belongs to the works written during Tanizaki's transitional period. Yoshimoto still has the burden of proof that the philosophy of culture found in *Some Prefer Nettles* is sustained in Tanizaki's later works.

The opposition between East and West and between modernization and tradition becomes more complicated when it is used to explain cultural phenomena in mainland China. For the political circumstances of China—i.e., the fact that China is a socialist country and its government was reluctant to be open to Western culture during the Cultural Revolution—adds another layer to the already complicated dichotomies. Lau focuses on the Sixth Generation cinema, while de Kloet focuses on underground rock music in mainland China. They convincingly argue that the valorization of cultural phenomena in the 1990s—the Sixth Generation cinema as politically "dissident" or rock music as "subversive"—is often based upon false dichotomies of West vs. East, modernization vs. tradition, anti/pro-socialist government, and subversive vs. mainstream art.

Lau claims that the Sixth Generation directors' apparent political stance against official governmental ideology comes from the fact that Sixth Generation cinema is often banned within mainland China, and thus owes its existence to the film festival market; Sixth Generation films are often funded internationally and circulated via international film festivals. However, Lau correctly argues that viewing the political stance of their films merely as anti-governmental neglects one important characteristic of Sixth Generation cinema which differentiates it from the Fifth Generation cinema: its indifference and obliviousness to politics in general. Lau claims that what is emphasized in Sixth Generation films such as *The Postman* or *The Days* is not the heroic resistance or survival of political flux (as is often portrayed in Fifth Generation cinema), but rather the ordinary experience of reality, which sometimes escapes, or is unaffected by, political change or turmoil.

De Kloet warns about the pitfall of equating rock music with subversive musical forms. He argues against what he calls "rock mythology," which valorizes rock music in general as countercultural, political, and authentic. De Kloet contrasts the strategies employed by rock music bands—such as NO and the Fly—with those of a heavy metal band, Tang Dynasty. A similar stylistic fusion can be found in the music in that all three incorporate traditional Chinese instruments so as to create distinctive Chinese rock or heavy metal music. However, de Kloet claims, despite the apparent similarity between the two in terms of their stylistic fusion, their respective songs bear opposite ideologies. While NO and the Fly indirectly critique party ideology via their lyrics and their emphasis on tabooed subjects such as sex, Tang Dynasty laments what they've lost—the Chinese past—and by doing so conforms to the party's chauvinistic ideology. De Kloet's point is well taken in that we cannot determine whether a certain type of music is subversive based purely on its form. But I wonder whether the difference de Kloet wants to draw between these two—rock bands such as NO and the Fly, and the heavy metal band Tang Dynasty—is as sharp as it seems. What should be distinguished here is the rhetoric employed in the self-promotion or publicity of Tang Dynasty vs. how their music actually functions within the society: To what extent we can accept their publicity at face value?

David Desser's "Consuming Asia: Chinese and Japanese Popular Culture and the American Imaginary" nicely complements the three essays that I have just discussed. In contrast to the common belief that cultural flow is unilateral, i.e., from West to East, Desser directs our attention to the fact that since the 1950s there have been significant imports from Asian cultures to the United States, such as Hong Kong martial arts movies, Japanese samurai and *Gojira* (Godzilla) films, anime, and video games, and that we should not neglect their influences on Hollywood cinema or on American culture in general. In his essay, he not only investigates the causes of such cultural imports, but also some of the reasons why Hong Kong martial arts films and Japanese anime are able to appeal to American audiences.

The second question that some of the essays share is the limitation of a modern vs. postmodern typology in explaining cultural scenes in East Asia. While Han Ju Kwak (chapter five) and Chuck Kleinhans (chapter nine) aim to show the coexistence of diverse film styles in South Korean cinema and in action films, Hector Rodriguez (chapter seven) and Dai Jinhua (chapter eight) show the inability of "postmodernism" to describe cultural underpinnings in Hong Kong and in Beijing.

Han Ju Kwak, in his essay on South Korean cinema, argues that three different stances toward modernized Korea can be found: the movement approach, the tradition approach, and the postmodern approach. These three approaches are represented in films by three directors, Park Kwang-su, Im Kwon-taek, and Hong Sangsoo. What Kwak calls the movement approach is closely linked to political-cultural phenomena of the 80s, during which college students were actively involved in pro-labor movements and social issues. Park, in his films such as *Black Republic* and *A Single Spark,* foregrounds the problems within capitalized society such as the exploitation of labor and the alienation of workers from their products. On the other hand, veteran director Im laments the loss of traditions in his film *Sopyonje,* while he examines the possibility of resuscitating tradition within the present in *Festival*. Lastly, characters in Hong's film *The Day a Pig Fell into the Well* manifest paradigmatic characteristics of postmodern society such as a fragmented self and conflicting desires. Kwak's examination of these three directors is helpful for understanding some of the political or aesthetic stances toward modernity manifested in their films. However, I wish he had informed us more about the industrial contexts in which these directors have been working. All three are so-called art cinema directors (although Im's *Sopyonje,* as Kwak claims, was a box-office success), and their films are often marketed for film festivals. It would have been helpful if Kwak had considered some of the mainstream films in South Korea that deal with similar issues differently than art cinema.

Although Kwak does not explicitly point to it in his essay, what seems to be significant in his discussion of var-

ious responses or reactions to modernization found in the film discussed is the fact that diverse art forms—realistic representation or postmodern sketches of contemporary life—coexist in late capitalist society. A similar point is made in Kleinhans' essay on action cinema. He examines some of John Woo's action films, and shows how heroes in Woo's films such as *Face/Off* and *The Killer* manifest characteristics of Romantic heroes. I agree with Kleinhans that Woo's characters manifest some traditional Chinese values such as *Yi*. However, it is unclear whether his observation successfully refutes Jameson's argument about postmodernism, proposing it as a means of periodization rather than as a cultural movement or style.[1] Jameson would not deny the coexistence of various styles and might further point out the nostalgic sentiment in Woo's films, which is one of the dominant characteristics of postmodernism.

Two essays, by Hector Rodriguez and Dai Jinhua, examine whether there exists a postmodern art scene in Hong Kong and in Beijing. Instead of applying a fixed set of postmodern characteristics to describe and explain the contemporary Hong Kong art scene, Rodriguez examines it with respect to its thematic preoccupations. He suggests that some of the cultural scenes in Hong Kong since the 1980s can be characterized as "culture of the fragmented commonplace." For example, Evans Chan's film *To Liv(e),* Xi Xi's novel *My City,* and Dung Kai-Cheung's play *The Atlas* share a thematic concern for everyday life in Hong Kong and its local culture. I believe one of the reasons Rodriguez tries to avoid characterizing such a trend with the all-encompassing term postmodern is because such an attempt would fall short of providing an explanation for the stylistic complexities manifested in these art works. Urban life in Hong Kong, including its local culture and its art scene, not only functions as a common referent in these works, but also becomes defamiliarized for the audience, and that process can be traced back to modernist aesthetics.

In his rather hard-to-follow essay, Dai Jinhua expresses skepticism toward the enthusiastic propagation of postmodernism in China in the 90s. Dai points out how the concept bears more political than artistic nuance in China in the sense that it enables the people of China to let go of the wounds and trauma of the 1980s without qualm, and lifts the burden of having to reflect upon their past. Moreover, Dai argues that labeling art practices of the 90s as postmodern would efface some of the common strategies found in literature and film in both the 80s and the 90s, what he calls "political parody." However, Dai also points out the different functions and limitations of parody during these two periods. If parodies appearing in the 80s function to ridicule and poke fun at the political revolution and resistance, parodies in the Sixth Generation cinema such as *In the Heat of the Sun* and *Growing Up* lack such a critical stance. Rather they reflect the childhood memories of a generation of filmmakers who grew up during the cultural revolution.

The three remaining essays are concerned with the issue of race and gender. Yomota Inuhiko (chapter four) examines three Japanese directors, each of whom questions the common belief that Japan is a relatively homogeneous society. Augusta Lee Palmer and Lau (chapter eleven) pay critical attention to the representations of women in the Hong Kong Second New Wave directors' cinema, while Lin Szu-ping (chapter twelve) examines the production circumstances and the reception of a Taiwanese TV show called "The Woman with Broken Palm Lines." A large portion of Yomota's essay is dedicated to two Japanese directors whose films portray ethnic problems in Japan. According to Yomota, while Iwai's film *Swallowtail Butterfly* deals rather abstractly with racial issues in Japan and conveniently drops the most acute racial issue—discrimination against resident Koreans—the racial issues in Sai's *All Under the Moon* are treated more critically, but with humor. Although Yomota's analyses of these films are interesting and insightful, we are left puzzled by what gave rise to the rather unprecedented treatment of racial issues in these two films: Is it political or demographic changes in Japan? Yomota mentions in passing that the collapse of the studio system and the subsequent rise of independents might have some relevance. However, if, as Yomota claims, Sai has been working in the industry since the 80s, what are the conditions that allowed him to be able to portray ethnic issues more overtly in the 90s? More importantly, what is the significances of these two films? Is a multiethnic Japan a recurring theme in other Japanese films, or are the two films discussed in this essay merely isolated cases?

Palmer and Lau make an interesting observation about how female characters are depicted in films directed by the Second New Wave directors in Hong Kong—such as Wong Kar-wai, Clara Law, and Stanley Kwan. In their films, female characters are often represented negatively—either passive/submissive or hysterical. Palmer and Lau argue that most female characters in Wong's films are submissive and domesticated, and more screen time, as well as more sympathy, is given to male protagonists. However, in my view such a characterization does not do justice to Wong's films. For example, in *Days of Being Wild,* neither female nor male characters are portrayed favorably. None of the three male characters—Yuddi, Zeb (Jacky Cheung), and the policeman (Andy Lau)—seem to have any active agency, with a possible exception of the policeman. No character in the film has any specific goal and each falls for the wrong person. Furthermore, the mysterious appearance of Tony Leung in the last shot of the film reinforces the cyclical nature of aimless, rootless youths. Palmer and Lau argue that *Rouge,* a film about a 1930 courtesan named Ruhua (played by Anita Mui), merely uses the historical background as a decoy to indulge in the formal, historic beauty of the setting, instead of investigating or understanding the social structure that necessitates Ruhua's inevitable decision to commit suicide. In my view, in contrast to Palmer and Lau's reading of *Rouge,* the ending of the film points to the opposite: although we witness the naïvete of Ruhua throughout the film, the ending of the film clearly articulates her disillusionment about love. Even if we put aside this disagreement as a matter of interpretation, the essay still seems to lack the rigor or the detail of Lau's other piece. Palmer and Lau contrast the representation of women in art cinema with that of more mainstream swordplay cinema, and point out how the portrayal of

women in the latter genre seems to take a more progressive approach toward women. I wish that Palmer and Lau had taken industrial conditions, star persona, and generic norms into account when explaining the rather ironic reversal in representations of women in art cinema and in commercial cinema.

The methodology taken in this anthology—an attempt to avoid dogmatic readings of complex cultural phenomena in East Asia—should be deeply appreciated and adopted by more scholars in the field. However, I wish that more essays had been included concerning not only the cultural exchange between East and West, but also the cultural exchanges among East Asian countries. As Lau mentions in the introduction to the anthology, China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have each incorporated Western technology, culture, and values. However, some reflection on the recent efforts to promote regional cultures and cultural products—whether it be film, TV show, magazines, and more—for a Pan-Asian market would have better illuminated the dynamic between the global and the local.

Note

1. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 3.

Jinhee Choi is Assistant Professor of Film Studies at Carleton University, in Canada. She is the co-editor, with Noel Carroll, of *Philosophy of Film* (forthcoming, Blackwell).

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The New Media Book

Edited by Dan Harries. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press/BFI, 2002. $70.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.

The discourse around so-called new media has developed and expanded about as rapidly as the digital technologies that make up the field. *The New Media Book* aims to illuminate key issues surrounding this technological and discursive proliferation. Comprising 20 essays by leading scholars from multiple disciplines, the text presents a wide range of views and insights about new media. The book's five sections replicate the schematic divisions that normally occur within media studies: Technologies, Production, Texts, Consumption, and Contexts. Within these divisions, however, diverse approaches are taken and a number of different topics addressed. Fundamental questions surrounding new media frequently arise which transcend the specific technology or example under analysis, including interactivity, convergence, nonlinearity, database structures, globalization, virtuality, and multimedia.

"Technologies" features essays that delineate the historical development of certain technologies while simultaneously exploring how these developments existed within a wider cultural arena. It is this section of *The New Media Book* that begins to define what is meant by new media as an object of study, in terms of specific technologies. This means a plethora of different communication, production, distribution, and display devices, including DVD, digital television, and the Internet, among others. In "Cable, Satellite and Digital Technologies," Michele Hilmes charts the economic and policy-related issues that contributed to the development of those distribution technologies. Both Anne Friedberg and Jeremy G. Butler describe the historical development and social impact of different digital technologies in "CD and DVD" and "The Internet and the World Wide Web," respectively.

The essays featured in "Production" explore the profound effect digital technologies have had on the legal, economic, and creative forces that shape media production more generally. P. David Marshall defines "The New Intertextual Commodity" as the product of a new industrial strategy, aimed at creating commodities comprising different, though intertextually related, cultural forms. Douglas Thomas explores how the collapse of traditional divisions between production, consumption, and distribution instituted by digital technologies has produced a new ethos of sharing in "Innovation, Piracy and the Ethos of New Media."

"Texts" features essays that investigate the relationship between digital texts and other cultural forms, and intersections between their respective structuring logics. This motivates investigations of comic books, contemporary feature films, and interactive narratives. In fact, the issue of interactivity, its successes and failures, recurs throughout the essays of this section. In "Narrative Equivocations Between Movies and Games," Marsha Kinder clearly and usefully refines notions of narrative in order to delineate relationships between games and movies. Elsewhere, Scott Bukatman explores how online comics problematize distinctions between moving and still images. In all these cases, new media is positioned as the means by which valuable potentialities of traditional aesthetic forms are illuminated, shifted, and expanded.

New media has also shifted notions about spectator reception because of the potentially participatory and multifunctional modes of engagement it encourages. The "Consumption" section deals with these issues. In "Interactive Audiences?" Henry Jenkins locates fandom as a knowledge community where a number of significant, participatory spectator relationships have developed, and which new media mobilizes in particular ways. Editor Dan Harries theorizes a new kind of spectator, the "viewser," who synthesizes two distinct modes of media engagement in order to actively shape the content of the media s/he passively consumes. Yet spectator repositioning is not without ideological or political consequence, as brilliantly indicated in Tara McPherson's "Self, Other and Electronic Media," where she warns against the continuation of racist logics in new media.

The final section, "Contexts," features essays concerned with the larger historical and cultural contexts that have shaped both new media and old, as well as their mutual interrelations. Each essay uses either film or television as the lens through which the development of new media is understood. In "Old Media as New Media: Cinema," Lev Manovich traces the aesthetic innovations of digital special effects

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and "DV realism" to paradigms founded in the origins of cinema. In another essay discussing cinema, Jan Simmons takes issue with the fundamental concept of new media, aiming to undermine the basic tenets under which it has been theorized. William Boddy illuminates the issues facing the television industry in the face of personal digital television recorders, such as TiVo, in his provocative "New Media as Old Media: Television."

The New Media Book provides a broad survey of several of the issues that are raised by the advent and implementation of digital technologies. The essays included represent an impressively wide range of specific topics on the subject, all written in clear, easy-to-understand language. Although the essays are relatively brief, few extending beyond 12 pages, they manage to treat their respective subjects with clarity and precision. By presenting this wide range of topically organized and insightful essays, *The New Media Book* functions well as a useful introduction to the central issues of new media.

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Orson Welles

Interviews

Edited by Mark Estrin. Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2002. $46.00 cloth; $18.00 paper.

Mark Estrin's fascinating collection of interviews, conversations, and profiles (in the "Conversations with Filmmakers" series, edited by Peter Brunette) confirms that what Welles said, with typical hyperbole, of Hollywood—"There's nothing you can say about it that isn't true, good or bad" (193)—might also be taken as a veiled commentary on himself. *Orson Welles: Interviews* is as prismatic as *Citizen Kane,* revealing its subject as complex and protean, charming and annoying, mightily ambitious and successful but also perennially blocked and diverted, earning admiration and applause as well as various forms of dismissal, neglect, and comeuppance. The last term is particularly haunting, and, as in Booth Tarkington's *The Magnificent Ambersons,* for all its homespun associations takes on Shakespearean resonance and pathos as it comes to describe a recurrent pattern at the heart of Welles's life and art, one etched throughout this book.

There is plenty of material here about Welles's life as well as his art, realms that seem especially intertwined for him. From the beginning he was "shaped," by himself and others, as an artist, and throughout the volume we see not only this process but also some of its consequences. Estrin stretches the definition of the term "interview" so that he can print items that, even without Welles playing a featured speaking role, show the Welles legend and its making. For example, he includes the final installment of a three-part *Saturday Evening Post* article from 1940 by Alva Johnston and Fred Smith, "How to Raise a Child: The Education of Orson Welles, Who Didn't Need It," which focuses on and contributes to his being "branded for life" as "America's leading *enfant terrible*," boy wonder, infamous "Mars man" (because of the unforgettable *War of the Worlds* broadcast), and, ironically, victim of his reputation. Similarly, Gore Vidal's "Remembering Orson Welles," which concludes the volume, is primarily about the Welles persona, and attempts to somehow define the "purest Welles" (218), summed up intriguingly as composed of a "set of conflicting humours" (211), by reminiscing about the impression he made, as much in restaurants and on television appearances as in his late unrealized projects.

Welles speaks for himself more directly and extensively in the other pieces in the volume, and is frequently concerned with what he described to BBC interviewer Huw Wheldon as the duty of showmanship (91), the interminable job of "getting to the public" as well as setting the record straight on some subjects and in general trying to take some control of his persona, career, and reputation. The strain of doing this is evident in numerous places, heightened by Welles's sense that, as he told Kenneth Tynan, wherever he went, "I drag my myth around with me" (136). No wonder that in a comical but candid moment he said to his good friend Wheldon that "I hate interviews . . . and do everything I can to ruin the . . . image of myself" (91)—a statement that, like so many of the self-consciously quotable epigrams sprinkled throughout this volume, is somewhat less than a consistent credo but somewhat more than a disposable *jeu d'esprit*.

Despite his occasional disparaging and exhausted remarks about interviews, he was, I think, serious, not cynical, when he told Gore Vidal that "I have made an art form of the interview" (216). More important than merely as occasions for showmanship, self-display, and self-defense, interviews were vital extensions of both "good conversation," which he felt was "an essential part of good living" (134), and the social engagement that he felt was at the essence of good art. "A work of art," he said, "is a conscious human effort that has to do with communication. It is that or it is nothing" (144). He was never an artist of the garret or the margins, and he habitually wanted to be in the center, defined as where the people are, where the audience is. Accordingly, while one can hardly imagine, say, Kafka being interviewed, one can hardly imagine Welles not being interviewed.

If there wasn't anyone to interview him, he would interview himself, as he did increasingly and often with great ingenuity in his later works, such as "Don Quixote, Orson Welles's Sketchbooks" (a six-part television series for the BBC), *Filming Othello,* and *F for Fake*. But for the most part, there were plenty of people around to interview him, and Estrin has gathered some of the best of these conversations, each of which succeeds in getting Welles past his not entirely disingenuous claim that "I don't like talking about my work" (35). There is, as we might expect, a miscellaneous quality to the book, and to the individual interviews, which often ramble freely, but even the bits and pieces are fascinating. These include anecdotes about on the set improvisations, praise for innovation and experiment even

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within a broader context of tradition, reflections on his own high medieval rather than Renaissance mentality, and frequent recollections of unrealized dreams, ambitions, and projects: to be a college president, write a picture about sexual obsession, run a theater school, become a writer or painter, make a film of one of the many comedies he had written, and so on.

His comments on cinema, especially his own films, which form a large part of the volume, are always substantive and interesting. Estrin rightly notes that many of the later interviews "are characterized by an increasingly pronounced collective stocktaking" (xvii), and we are fortunate to have Welles's own detailed inner views and overviews of his works, which he describes and analyzes shrewdly, entertainingly, and at times somewhat wistfully. One of the strongest impressions we get as we overhear Welles talking is the depth, extent, and sincerity of his social and political concern, often underappreciated elements inextricably and subtly as well as overtly embedded in the text and texture of his works. We find evidence of this concern throughout the volume: for example, in his summary of his own application of The Method ("I believe in preparing actors by telling them about the entire society in which they live rather than emphasizing the psychological and psychiatric and Freudian aspects of characterization" [90]), his emphasis on "what a film says" rather than "cinematic style and plastic shrinery" (93), and his repeated affirmation that he was a man of ideas, often about our communal dilemmas, and, at least in a carefully qualified sense, a moralist. All these qualities endeared Welles particularly to the critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma,* and the *Cahiers* interviews with Bazin et al. and Juan Cobos et al. are not only highlights of the present volume but perhaps among the most important Welles ever participated in, to a large extent because of their remarkable exploration of what he calls his "moral cinemascope" (112)—his attempt to make films that embody an "ethical point of view" without oversimplifying this quest or losing sympathy for those all too human and all too many of us whose morals and actions one cannot approve of.

I wish that Estrin had saved room for more of these kinds of interviews (some of which he cites in his introduction [xxv]) by leaving out the personal profiles and perhaps the interesting but long section from Leslie Megahey's BBC program, *The Orson Welles Story,* easily available on videotape. And it would have been nice to have more early pieces, rare and hard to come by, as Estrin notes, but well worth tracking down and reprinting. But the volume as it stands is comprehensive, interesting, and useful from beginning to end, and exactly the kind of book Welles deserves—and, for what it is worth, perhaps would have welcomed. When Wheldon ended their interview by asking what he would like people to remember him by, Welles said that he hoped there might be a book that, unlike most studies available at the time that, in his eyes, were "*very* derogatory," would instead contain "something nicer that they could read about me," "if somebody should ever want to know about me" (94, 95). Without puffery or special pleading, *Orson Welles: Interviews* is such a book, reminding us that, in the words of *Touch of Evil,* when considering richly complex and ambiguous characters, of whom Welles was certainly one, we can admit that in some ways "You're a mess, honey" and still conclude that "He was some kind of a man."

Sidney Gottlieb is Professor of Media Studies at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, and editor of *Alfred Hitchcock: Interviews* (University Press of Mississippi).

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A Panorama of American Film Noir, 1941–1953

By Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton. Trans. Paul Hammond. San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 2002. $16.95.

Black & White & Noir

America's Pulp Modernism

By Paula Rabinowitz. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. $18.50.

Borde and Chaumeton's *Panorama du film noir américain* was first published in France in 1955 and now appears for the first time in English—almost 50 years later—in a crisp translation by Paul Hammond. If one of the ironies of the initial publication of Borde and Chaumeton's study was that it materialized just as the classical period of noir was coming to a close (the terminus usually set by critics is either 1955, the date of Aldrich's apocalyptic *Kiss Me Deadly,* or 1958, the date of Welles's baroque, south-of-the-border *Touch of Evil*), one contemporary irony—as a number of recent films, *Memento* (2000), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), among others, testifies—is that noir as a genre is arguably more robust than ever.

To be sure, noir for Borde and Chaumeton was not so much a genre as a "series," or a "group of nationally identifiable films sharing certain common features": "style, atmosphere, subject" (1). Although the current critical wisdom is that noir, unlike the musical or Western, is *not* a genre (see Steve Neale's *Genre and Hollywood* [2000]), most people would concur with Borde and Chaumeton that it is—at least in its early, classical phase—an *American* series. But Neale aside, and given that film noir's status has definitively moved, as Rick Altman observes in *Film/Genre* (1999), from an adjectival to a substantive one, it's quite refreshing to have the authors of *A Panorama of American Film Noir* declare that "noir is *for us*" (5). The advantage of this formulation, it seems to me, is that it effectively displaces the whole "generic" question of what noir is to the rather more intriguing issue of viewers and audiences.

From this reception perspective, the interest—indeed, charm—of Borde and Chaumeton's panoramic survey of noir from 1941 to 1953 derives less from its presentation of so-called empirical or historical spectatorship than from

within a broader context of tradition, reflections on his own high medieval rather than Renaissance mentality, and frequent recollections of unrealized dreams, ambitions, and projects: to be a college president, write a picture about sexual obsession, run a theater school, become a writer or painter, make a film of one of the many comedies he had written, and so on.

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Reel History

In Defense of Hollywood

By Robert Brent Toplin. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002, $35.00 cloth; $17.95 paper.

Curiously, Robert Brent Toplin, in *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood,* is concerned with the same issue Sir Philip Sidney was some four centuries earlier in *The Defense of Poesie* (1595). Sidney was asking whether the philosopher, the historian, or the poet was most likely to arrive at the truth of human character and conduct. In a subtle and elegant argument he arrives at poetry (by which we would mean fiction) as the surest source. Toplin's concern is with American feature films and television series and progams about historical matters: the extent to which they do or don't (or are obliged to) limit themselves to historians' understanding of the events and persons with which they deal. For him truth appears in books about history and fiction in films, though he finally plumps for a bit of both in order to make movies that are popular out of historical subjects.

One might wonder whether this particular ethical/aesthetic question is a lively one these days, and Toplin produces evidence that others than himself—including not only fellow historians but also film reviewers with eyes on their readership, the audience for these films presumably—are interested. As a matter of fact, he has made a speciality out of this interest: among his ten books are *Oliver Stone's USA: Film, History, and Controversy*; *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past*; and *Ken Burns's The Civil War: Historians Respond*. But granting sufficient interest, it is still difficult to figure out whom he sees as the reader of this book.

The beginning chapters are introductory-textbook-like, aimed, in part at least, at aspiring scriptwriters ("the student of film needs to recognize the medium's conventions and limitations. History from Hollywood almost always appears in its familiar generic form" (41). There is considerable stating of the obvious ("audiences will quickly turn away from cinematic history if they do not find its dramatic presentation compelling" [10], or "no filmmaker can approach historical evidence with complete objectivity" [131]—what about historians? you might want to ask). One section heading bold-facedly proclaims that CINEMATIC HISTORY FREQUENTLY INJECTS ROMANCE INTO ITS STORIES, EVEN WHEN AMOROUS AFFAIRS ARE NOT CENTRAL TO THE HISTORICAL EVENTS (46). Really? There is also redundancy and repetition ("A movie's potential for communicating specific verbal information is minute in comparison to a book's capacity for delivering detailed commentary. There is no opportunity to explore multiple interpretations of events in a drama, whereas a book can attempt such an exploration in 200 or 300 pages" [23]—this point is made repeatedly).

For one concerned with accuracy of historical detail, Toplin makes a number of errors in regard to the history of film and specific films. For example: Adrian Scott (first name misspelled as Andrian) was producer not "writer for 1947 movie *Crossfire*" (17). *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) was a British film, not Hollywood as stated (31). *Bonnie and Clyde* was set in the 1930s, not the 1920s (42). "David Lean, who had a distinguished career as a cinematographer before he became a director" (48) had in fact been a film editor. The trouble with piddling errors of this sort is that they tend to undermine the reader's confidence: What other, larger matters has the author gotten wrong?

One of the oddest parts of *Reel History* is chapter five, "The Study of Cinematic History." In it Toplin berates cinema scholars for their lack of understanding of (or even interest in) historical methodology, their jargon, ideological biases, and general unintelligibility. The oddity is that he's not thinking of film historians at all; rather, of a selected few film theorists. The only film historian cited is Janet Staiger; but, instead of using her highly respected and unusually detailed examination of the evolution of the Hollywood studio system which produced the movies (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema, The Studio System*), he offers a partial-

within a broader context of tradition, reflections on his own high medieval rather than Renaissance mentality, and frequent recollections of unrealized dreams, ambitions, and projects: to be a college president, write a picture about sexual obsession, run a theater school, become a writer or painter, make a film of one of the many comedies he had written, and so on.

His comments on cinema, especially his own films, which form a large part of the volume, are always substantive and interesting. Estrin rightly notes that many of the later interviews "are characterized by an increasingly pronounced collective stocktaking" (xvii), and we are fortunate to have Welles's own detailed inner views and overviews of his works, which he describes and analyzes shrewdly, entertainingly, and at times somewhat wistfully. One of the strongest impressions we get as we overhear Welles talking is the depth, extent, and sincerity of his social and political concern, often underappreciated elements inextricably and subtly as well as overtly embedded in the text and texture of his works. We find evidence of this concern throughout the volume: for example, in his summary of his own application of The Method ("I believe in preparing actors by telling them about the entire society in which they live rather than emphasizing the psychological and psychiatric and Freudian aspects of characterization" [90]), his emphasis on "what a film says" rather than "cinematic style and plastic shrinery" (93), and his repeated affirmation that he was a man of ideas, often about our communal dilemmas, and, at least in a carefully qualified sense, a moralist. All these qualities endeared Welles particularly to the critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma,* and the *Cahiers* interviews with Bazin et al. and Juan Cobos et al. are not only highlights of the present volume but perhaps among the most important Welles ever participated in, to a large extent because of their remarkable exploration of what he calls his "moral cinemascope" (112)—his attempt to make films that embody an "ethical point of view" without oversimplifying this quest or losing sympathy for those all too human and all too many of us whose morals and actions one cannot approve of.

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Curiously, Robert Brent Toplin, in *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood,* is concerned with the same issue Sir Philip Sidney was some four centuries earlier in *The Defense of Poesie* (1595). Sidney was asking whether the philosopher, the historian, or the poet was most likely to arrive at the truth of human character and conduct. In a subtle and elegant argument he arrives at poetry (by which we would mean fiction) as the surest source. Toplin's concern is with American feature films and television series and progams about historical matters: the extent to which they do or don't (or are obliged to) limit themselves to historians' understanding of the events and persons with which they deal. For him truth appears in books about history and fiction in films, though he finally plumps for a bit of both in order to make movies that are popular out of historical subjects.

One might wonder whether this particular ethical/aesthetic question is a lively one these days, and Toplin produces evidence that others than himself—including not only fellow historians but also film reviewers with eyes on their readership, the audience for these films presumably—are interested. As a matter of fact, he has made a speciality out of this interest: among his ten books are *Oliver Stone's USA: Film, History, and Controversy*; *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past*; and *Ken Burns's The Civil War: Historians Respond*. But granting sufficient interest, it is still difficult to figure out whom he sees as the reader of this book.

The beginning chapters are introductory-textbook-like, aimed, in part at least, at aspiring scriptwriters ("the student of film needs to recognize the medium's conventions and limitations. History from Hollywood almost always appears in its familiar generic form" (41). There is considerable stating of the obvious ("audiences will quickly turn away from cinematic history if they do not find its dramatic presentation compelling" [10], or "no filmmaker can approach historical evidence with complete objectivity" [131]—what about historians? you might want to ask). One section heading bold-facedly proclaims that CINEMATIC HISTORY FREQUENTLY INJECTS ROMANCE INTO ITS STORIES, EVEN WHEN AMOROUS AFFAIRS ARE NOT CENTRAL TO THE HISTORICAL EVENTS (46). Really? There is also redundancy and repetition ("A movie's potential for communicating specific verbal information is minute in comparison to a book's capacity for delivering detailed commentary. There is no opportunity to explore multiple interpretations of events in a drama, whereas a book can attempt such an exploration in 200 or 300 pages" [23]—this point is made repeatedly).

For one concerned with accuracy of historical detail, Toplin makes a number of errors in regard to the history of film and specific films. For example: Adrian Scott (first name misspelled as Andrian) was producer not "writer for 1947 movie *Crossfire*" (17). *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) was a British film, not Hollywood as stated (31). *Bonnie and Clyde* was set in the 1930s, not the 1920s (42). "David Lean, who had a distinguished career as a cinematographer before he became a director" (48) had in fact been a film editor. The trouble with piddling errors of this sort is that they tend to undermine the reader's confidence: What other, larger matters has the author gotten wrong?

One of the oddest parts of *Reel History* is chapter five, "The Study of Cinematic History." In it Toplin berates cinema scholars for their lack of understanding of (or even interest in) historical methodology, their jargon, ideological biases, and general unintelligibility. The oddity is that he's not thinking of film historians at all; rather, of a selected few film theorists. The only film historian cited is Janet Staiger; but, instead of using her highly respected and unusually detailed examination of the evolution of the Hollywood studio system which produced the movies (*The Classical Hollywood Cinema, The Studio System*), he offers a partial-

provides a crucial "frame for understanding African American experience" (90).

If it were only for its contribution to this neglected topic—what one might call the "blackness" of noir America—Rabinowitz's book would justify the wood out of which it was pulped, but, as the title indicates, *Black & White & Noir* also explores noir as a site of whiteness where, for example, the Coens' "blanc" noir *Fargo* (1995) represents a "white" rural counterpoint to the glittering "black" wilderness of the city. Still, for this noir-obsessed reader, the most engaging part of Rabinowitz's book is the third and final section,"Noir," where she essays meditations on, among many things, Barbara Stanwyck's anklet as an accessory to the "crime of female desire" (172); the uncanny objects—"phonograph, telephone, bread knife, window, and mirrors" (220)—that animate the California bungalow which is the primal scene of Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943); and the scarlet letter sewn on Hester Prynne's chest in Hawthorne's novel as the prototype of the jagged, zig-zag map of noir: "We need Barbara Stanwyck to help make sense of Hester Prynne . . . as much as Hester and her riveting *A* . . . stand Phyllis in brilliant relief" (229).

The history of noir as a genre—from its origins in the horror film, German Expressionism, and the gothic romance to its present state as a platform for stylish, self-reflexive improvisations like *Mulholland Drive*—is a complex and, for some, vexing issue. But these books testify to its enduring appeal: if film noir, as a genre, is a fantasy, then it's a fantasy—like Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (1946)—that has legs.

Robert Miklitsch is the author of *From Hegel to Madonna* (SUNY, 1998). In addition to *Roll Over Adorno,* which will be published in 2005 by SUNY Press, he has work forthcoming on "The Sopranos," in *New Review of Film and Television Studies* (Fall 2004) and on Slavoj Žižek, in *Reading Žižek* (Ashgate, 2005).

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Reel History

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sentence quote from an article of hers entitled "This Moving Image I Have Before Me," which appeared in an anthology, *Film as Artifact,* edited by John E. O'Connor, credited by Toplin as "one of the historians who pioneered research on the use of film for the study of history" (160). Neither the names nor books of Charles Musser (e.g., *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*) or Tom Gunning (e.g., *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph*), whose archival research opened up a whole new understanding of the first two decades of the American film, appears. Nor is Richard Abel's monumental body of work on the history of French cinema (e.g., *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*), including its industrial and cultural contexts, referred to. Evident among these works and many others are standards of historical research any historian would respect.

Toplin's extended discussions of particular films are much more sophisticated and interesting than other sections. It's as if he had assumed that the readers of the early chapters had given no previous thought to the matters he's interested in, but have become sufficiently educated through their reading of *Reel History* to handle complex explications. For quite a number of films, accounts of the production process are included, as well as discussions of the historical issues involved, which, incidentally, make clearer his concerns and arguments than do his generalizations. Films receiving most space are: *Amistad* (1997), *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Denmark Vesey's Rebellion* (1982), *The Hurricane* (1999), *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Titanic* (1997). Of these, *Denmark Vesey's Rebellion* (a television film for PBS-TV on which Toplin was involved throughout its production) and *Schindler's List* tie for most attention; *The Hurricane* receives least.

One can assume from the way these films are dealt with that the weight given to them is based not on their aesthetic excellence or historical accuracy but, instead, on the extent to which the historical issues they raise are interesting ones to discuss. Except for *The Birth of a Nation* and *Denmark Vesey's Rebellion,* all of them were released within the last decade. Six of the eight films concern racial or ethnic conflict, all but one of those conflicts being between Caucasians and African Americans. Toplin offers no explanation for this selectivity. Of *Amistad, Mississippi Burning,* and *The Hurricane,* he says about the strong criticism directed against them, "The problems concerned excesses in artistic license. In these cases, the producers, directors, and writers manipulated so many elements for dramatic effect that they undermined the overall truthfulness of their historical interpretations" (69).

This leads to Toplin's most useful concept in his approach to all of this material: what he calls *faction*. In an attempt to reconcile his own truth and fiction (or Sidney's historian and poet), Toplin observes that:

> Movie artists have developed narrative strategies that are less vulnerable to assault by the fact checkers. In recent years they have produced a number of films that represent an art form that can be identified as "faction." Faction-based movies spin highly fictional tales that are loosely based on actualities. . . . Three popular movies of 2000 dealt with the past through faction: *Gladiator, U-571,* and *The Patriot*. Each film can be assaulted for bending the historical evidence radically in order to design an entertaining story. Yet each motion picture can also be defended as undisguised faction, a highly creative perspective on history that views the past through metaphor rather than through the portrayal of specific situations, events, and people (92).

So his conclusion is that:

> The challenge of assessing cinematic history involves more than just raising complaints about the handling of evidence. . . . A sophisticated response also calls for recognition of the distinctive ways that movies can stir the public's thinking about history. To appreciate these contributions, we must think differently about the medium. Film cannot view the past in the fashion of the printed word, but it can serve as a powerful stimulant to historical thinking (203).

Jack Ellis is the co-author, with Virginia Wright Wexman, of the fifth edition of *A History of Film* (Allyn and Bacon, 2002).

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Screening the City

Edited by Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice. London: Verso, 2003. $20.00.

Cinema and the city have always gone hand in hand. Every major film genre has been linked to a specific place, and how many places are forever associated with the films made in or about them? But if this symbiotic relationship is as old as cinema itself, it has not always been the subject of critical attention. In their 2001 book *Cinema and the City* (Routledge), editors Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice first explored the links between film and space, proposing a "sociology of the cinema." Attempting to bring the two disciplines together, they sought to move critical focus away from the filmic text to the context—social, economic, and political—surrounding it. This book is a continuation of this examination of cinema and place together, "a two-way process which has fundamentally changed the way in which we think about motion pictures."

Screening the City focuses on tracing a geographic and stylistic trajectory that is supposed to correspond to a history of film and urban society. The book's two parts, intended to "set up a dialectical argument," might have been better presented as two separate books, so tenuous is the connection between them. Part One is entitled "The Modern City: Central and Eastern Europe," and it focuses, more or less, on just

sentence quote from an article of hers entitled "This Moving Image I Have Before Me," which appeared in an anthology, *Film as Artifact,* edited by John E. O'Connor, credited by Toplin as "one of the historians who pioneered research on the use of film for the study of history" (160). Neither the names nor books of Charles Musser (e.g., *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*) or Tom Gunning (e.g., *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph*), whose archival research opened up a whole new understanding of the first two decades of the American film, appears. Nor is Richard Abel's monumental body of work on the history of French cinema (e.g., *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*), including its industrial and cultural contexts, referred to. Evident among these works and many others are standards of historical research any historian would respect.

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that. Avant-garde and experimental films from *Berlin, the Symphony of a Great City* (1927) to Kieslowski's *Dekalog* (1988) are examined in light of the turbulent reality of the cities which they feature and in which they were made. Part Two seeks to posit against the modernist film-city (or city-film) the postwar, postmodern city of the U.S. and Canada. Here, New York also figures as a modern film-city, a foil to Los Angeles and Toronto as they are seen in a variety of films from the 60s through the 90s: documentary, Hollywood, and indie films. The editors claim to be "avoiding the schematic over-simplification which sometimes accompanies [the] categories" of modern and postmodern, but as a consequence the book seems to be guided by almost nothing at all.

Still, the book features several excellent essays which follow its guiding principle—juxtaposing city and cinema and using each to look at the other. The best essays not only bring the city into the analysis of a film, but also use the film and the conditions of its production to shed new light on social, political, and economic concerns of its historical place and time. In Part One, Peter Jelavich traces the adaptation of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* from novel (Alexander Döblin, 1929) to film (Piel Jutzi, 1931). A revolutionary novel, radical in both form and content, was transformed into a disappointing film that eschewed all of the story's alienation and urban exposé for a redeeming story of the persistence of humanity. Berlin disappearing from *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* as the author puts it, is a story unto itself, about the city's own descent into chaos. The global depression, widespread instability, and the consequent rise to power of the Nazi party formed the context in which the film was produced, between 1929 and 1931. A struggle on the part of the studio to stay profitable and a growing and very real fear of censorship lay behind a number of decisions that left the film empty of all the meaning of the novel. The adaptation reflects the confusing transition from the last days of the Weimar era to the beginning of Berlin's darkest moment, and provides a new vantage point to look at the already all-important relations between film and politics.

In Part Two, Mark Shiel's essay, "A Nostalgia for Modernity," looks at the 1970s paradigm shift from modernity to postmodernity, and a shift in urban power from New York City to Los Angeles. The shift is visible in the contemporaneous *Annie Hall* (1977) and *Network* (1976), two films which negotiated the New York/L.A. divide just as it was beginning to take shape. Both films shuttle between the two cities as New York, the modern capital, sinks into decay, overtaken by the crasser, more commercial city of Los Angeles, capital of "postmodern global capitalism." For Shiel, cinema's own struggle to adapt to the times plays out on screen, as both films demonstrate a nostalgia for the days of more authentic entertainment forms, destroyed in the film by the relentless and artificial West Coast culture industry.

Matthew Gandy has no difficulty in teasing out the political allegory in *[Safe]* (1995). Todd Haynes has stated it clearly enough himself: "I think what *[Safe]* is really about is the infiltration of New Age language into institutions. And about the failure of the Left." The physical breakdown of Carol White (Julianne Moore) due to severe chemical allergy, and her movement from the hermetic San Fernando Valley to an even more hermetically sealed New Age health retreat in the New Mexico desert, comments directly on the shift in American politics from more liberal times to the Reagan years. Reading the film against the political evolution of both the U.S. and California, Gandy examines how the government's retreat from protection of health, education, and the environment is allegorized in the film, along with the middle-class terror of the city and withdrawal to "Fortress LA," as Mike Davis has described it.

Davis looms large over *Screening the City,* from his endorsement on the front cover to citations in almost every essay in the book. His *City of Quartz* (1990) is the model for what this book is trying to do. Davis, in a true breakthrough for film and urban studies, debunked our conceptions of cinematic Los Angeles by looking at the history and social reality behind the representations of the city. Unfortunately, though they praise him incessantly, too many of the contributors to *Screening the City* fail to follow Davis's example. A majority of the essays indulge in the tired academic game of matching a theory to a movie, and so Bakhtin, Baudrillard, and Deleuze are bandied about, "applied" to a film and/or filmic representation of a city, without in the end providing new insights on the thinker, the film, or the city.

It's a shame, because there is still so much to discover about the way that films and cities act upon each other. Many of the essays in the second half of the book look at what one author calls "hood films" of the 1990s. This group of recent African-American films has a great deal to say not just about Los Angeles, but about a number of American cities, as well as the climate in which they were produced and released. And the new century has already begun to produce its own "cinematic fables of the contemporary city," as John Orr points out in the book's coda. A new generation of city films originating in capitals as diverse as Hong Kong and Buenos Aires includes some of the most exciting films in recent years. With a closer look, they could tell us much about the world we live in today.

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1. In the lengthiest passage of mine he cites (with incorrect page reference), he has changed the original wording of the last phrase. My original reads "venturing outside of society," but he has written, "venturing outside the community." Given the ensuing point he makes, it appears the reviewer has changed "society" to "community" to suit his negative comparison of my idea to Bakhtin and Robert Stam: "The Bakhtinian echoes can be heard in the passage above. However, unlike Robert Stam (a writer who is also concerned with subversion and community). . . ." Reaching back at least to Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft,* there is a critical tradition that distinguishes between "community" and "society." I was not talking about "community" in Bakhtin's, Stam's, or *any* sense of that term—and therefore did not use it.

2. Cudar's introduction to this passage is also misleading and inaccurate. He makes it sound as though I first review journey literature, then assert that "the road film emerged during the modernist movement," then "claim" the passage he cites. But this is all out of order. The (mis-)cited passage comes *before* my journey literature review, which itself comes *after* (not before, as he suggests) the section on modernism.

3. Later in the review he states the following: "The chapter proper begins with a discussion of George Miller's *The Road Warrior* (1982)—citing it as a postmodern text par excellence. Yet many of the examples he proffers as indications of postmodernism are more modernist than postmodern."

The section in question is titled "Heading *Toward* the Postmodern Wasteland" (emphasis added, i.e., not postmodern, but "toward" it). Here are some other phrases from my discussion of that film:

> —it "foretells the (postmodern) return of the genre";
> —"the film proves a good *starting point* for considering the postmodern road movie" (emphasis added);
> —"*The Road Warrior* extends several features of the modernist-existentialist road movie";
> —"While the film employs a fairly realistic (not very reflexive) cinematic approach, it *becomes* postmodern . . ." (emphasis added).

As anyone can see, my original text very much contradicts his claim: in no way do I "cite it as a postmodern text par excellence"; he also implies that I am unaware of the film's modernist features, which I clearly refer to.

4. Soon thereafter he states, "Then, suddenly, midway through his discussion of *The Road Warrior,* Laderman shifts to a consideration of *Repo Man*. . . ."

But the title of this section, "Heading Toward the Postmodern," is subtitled "*The Road Warrior* and *Repo Man,*" which prepares the reader for the two films to be discussed. Likewise, when I conclude my discussion of the one film, and begin my discussion of the next, there is a space, signaling the shift in focus. Is it accurate, let alone fair, to describe this as "suddenly, midway through . . ."?

There are other places where I think he unfairly misrepresents the book (e.g., "the boundaries of the genre are not clearly delimited"); or simply gets information wrong (none of the chapters list "nine films" of focus, which he dubiously asserts as "too many").

5. I believe it is valuable in a book review to point out what the author omitted, and might have included. But there is also an unreasonable way to evaluate a book for not being some other book. This is Cudar's grossest error. He himself acknowledges as much, saying things like, "A reader cannot fault a writer for examining a genre from such a vantage point as Laderman has . . . "; and, "In defense of Laderman, his book does not begin by defining itself as a philosophical interrogation of the idea of genre." In passing, Cudar concedes that my book is "praiseworthy" for what it is: an "historical overview" and a "critical biography." But then he seems compelled to grind his axe, making the very criticisms he suggests one should not be making. . . .

Such as faulting the book for not considering "meta-narrative failure, hegemony, and heterology" in describing postmodernism; or for not considering Raymond Williams' "theory on dominant, residual, and emergent elements" in comparing two characters from the early 1970s; or for not pursuing "the idea of 'convention' and 'deviation'" (though he himself points out two times when I *do* pursue this idea); or for not exploring "the conditions that make such an assertion [my thesis] possible." There are many more bulky theoretical lines of inquiry the book could have incorporated (Cudar rattles off several others)—which is precisely my point. In other words, such commentary, especially in a book review, is pretty much irrelevant: an easy put-down, a cheap shot, more concerned with some other imaginary book (he names five others mine should have been "along the lines of"). Again, Cudar himself characterizes these huge potential tangents as "gestures toward another (as yet unwritten) book."

The opening lines of the review throw a minor tantrum about my road puns. Yet, rather tellingly, the

reviewer can't help making them himself: "a reader simply runs out of gas"; "the automobile became a culturally freighted symbol. . . ." A cantankerous tone permeates the review which, combined with its errors, inaccuracies, and inappropriate emphasis on the unwritten, makes for a disservice to the book, and to *Film Quarterly* readers.

David Laderman
Author, *Driving Visions*

Dear Editor,

I appreciate the comments David Laderman makes about my review of his book *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie*. And, indeed, he is correct to point out the errors I made in writing of his text. Laderman rightly remarks that the last words in my block quote are "the community," while the text reads "of society." The first sentence and part of the second of this quote appear on page one, while my documentation cites only page two. It is also true that that his fifth chapter contains only eight films instead of the nine I incorrectly enumerated, though rechecking my notes I find that the back jacket of his book does in fact list nine films for the fifth chapter, with the ninth film mysteriously absent. It is, however, listed in the index as appearing in that chapter, on page 238. For these errors I apologize, but I must take exception to the author's suggestion that my punning is evidence of "cantankerousness." I would have hoped that a writer as fond of paronomasia as Mr. Laderman would have recognized the irony of using a pun or two after mentioning his over-insistence on precisely this type of "wit." Obviously that is not the case. Nor can I understand how three rather playful sentences can be construed as "a minor tantrum."

I must correct him on more substantive points as well. First, I never imply or suggest that the author does not understand modernism—rather it is his reductive and unsteady idea of the postmodern I find troubling. Though he does subtitle his section "*The Road Warrior* and *Repo Man*," I felt, and still feel, that the segue between the two films was abrupt and lacked a needed transition (a task a mere heading and "a space" cannot accomplish), leading me to write of a sudden shift in his analysis. More important, Laderman goes to significant length to defend this section heading as one that is moving "toward" the postmodern. But the chapter in question is "Blurring the Boundaries: The 1980s *Postmodern* Road Movie" (my emphasis). If, taken at his word, headings and titles are important indicators of his theoretical progression, how is it then plausible for Laderman to claim, as he does, that *The Road Warrior* is only moving toward postmodernism? He clearly states, "The postmodern road of *The Road Warrior* is illustrated by what I would call the film's 'deliberate camp' quality. Its over-the-top, tongue-in-cheek attitude drives the plot to the brink of the ridiculous" (138). And, more to the point, he asserts that in *The Road Warrior*:

> [T]he film's specific dystopian production design aims for a cartoonish quality: characters, costumes, dialogue, and story all reek of comic-book fantasy. This is not to suggest that every science fiction film is postmodern. The postmodernism engaged in by *The Road Warrior* is its brazen, exaggerated mockery of its own status as fantasy (138-39).

The reader is left to wonder why Mr. Laderman finds it so daunting simply to clarify his claims about postmodernism.

Also, in mentioning my article's "cantankerous tone," again, Laderman has gotten it precisely wrong, for it is he, not I, who has an axe to grind. Throughout my review I try to highlight the positive aspects of his book, offering several instances where I feel *Driving Visions* indeed provides a useful overview of the road movie, *one* of its stated goals, and that Laderman's readings of various films are strong and engaging. Finally, I, of course, intended no maliciousness in mentioning works by other authors writing in the field of genre studies. I cite these other texts only by way of illustrating the possibilities open to a writer. How can a book be contextualized within a given field if not by comparing it to, or situating it against, other existing texts? Must it really be said that criticism should not be seen as a weapon of attack but rather as what it is: a tool for the purpose of honing the intellect and sharpening the faculty of judgment?

Ultimately I fail to see how, considering his objections and qualifications, Mr. Laderman's letter addresses my thesis. His demurrals are minor and in fact elide the central point of my critique: that his book possesses both structural and stylistic flaws which work to undercut his theoretical assertions. I stand by my review and see no reason to alter it except where technical errors of the sort Mr. Laderman has kindly brought to my attention demand correction. I wish the author good luck in his future endeavors, for as I have written, *Driving Visions* has promise, even though to my mind part of that promise was not kept.

David W. Cudar
St. Petersburg College

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